THURSDAY
February 27, 2025

BENGALURU
CITY EDITION
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NITISH EXPANDS CABINET

Seven new Ministers take oath in Bihar

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TELANGANA TUNNEL COLLAPSE

Concrete rescue plan devised, says Minister

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TAX DISPUTE

Authorities single out Volkswagen

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GOVERNMENT AND WELFARE

A leap backward for maternity entitlements

Many pregnant women are being denied benefits

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THRILLING WIN

Gritty Afghanistan knocks out England

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Grand finale

Spiritual journey: Devotees gather at the Triveni Sangam to take a holy dip on Mahashivaratri, marking the culmination of the 45-day Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj on Wednesday. R.V. MOORTHY (REPORT ON PAGE 10)

South will not lose LS seats on delimitation, says Shah

Home Minister says PM has ensured no seat is going to be cut on a pro rata basis; DMK's A. Raja terms the stance 'confusing,' asking if pro rata is based on population or existing number of seats

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the inauguration of the new office building of the BJP in Coimbatore on Wednesday. M. PERIASAMY

Southern States will not be affected by the delimitation exercise, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has ensured that not a single Lok Sabha seat is going to be "reduced on a pro rata basis", Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Wednesday. He said the southern States would get their rightful share if the number of Lok Sabha seats were to be increased.

Mr. Shah was attempting to dismiss the concerns raised by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, who recently warned that the State could lose eight Lok Sabha seats on delimitation if it is based on population changes recorded in the Census. Mr. Stalin has called for an all-party meeting on March 5, claiming that the State's successful implementation of family planning policies has now placed it at a disadvantage in terms of electoral representation.

Speaking at the inauguration of new buildings for BJP offices in Coimbatore, Ramanathapuram, and Tiruvannamalai districts, Mr. Shah reiterated the assurance given by Mr. Modi in Parliament that the southern States would not lose a single seat to delimitation.

However, the DMK said the Union Home Minister's assurance was "confusing". DMK MP A. Raja told presspersons that the key question had not been answered. "There is no clear answer to the question of whether the pro rata basis will be on the basis of the existing number of constituencies or the population," he said. Tamil Nadu should not be punished for achieving population control, Mr. Raja said.

Mr. Stalin's stand is that delimitation based on population is not acceptable, Mr. Raja said.

"We are not just against the reduction of seats. It is an injustice even if they retain our existing seats and increase seats for north Indian States on the basis of population. Pro rata basis should be based on the 1971 census and the existing number of MPs," the DMK leader said.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

NEARBY

Bus services to Maharashtra resume

BELAGAVI
The NWKRTC began running buses on some routes to Maharashtra on Wednesday. Operations on around 50 routes began from depots in Belagavi and Chikkodi. All the services may resume by Thursday, officers said.

» PAGE 4

City still runs on an outdated master plan

BENGALURU
The city has been running with an outdated master plan for a decade now as the Revised Master Plan, currently in force in Bengaluru, was supposed to expire and be replaced with another RMP in 2015, which never happened. » Page 3

Govt. questions pleas for lifetime ban on convicted politicians

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Centre reasoned that penal punishments largely tend to be finite in quantum and time.

The Centre has questioned the logic behind the demand for a lifetime ban on convicted politicians from contesting elections or being nominated to Parliament or State legislatures.

It said that prison sentences or punishments under penal law are for a specific period, say a few years, after which convicts regain their rights and are prompted to rejoin society.

The Centre was responding to pleas, including one by advocate A.K. Upadhyay, seeking a lifetime ban on convicted politicians from contesting elections.

It had filed a similar affidavit in December 2020, maintaining that disqualification under Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act of 1951 for the period of prison sentence and six years thereafter was enough punishment for errant or criminal legislators. But, on February 10, the top court said there was an apparent conflict of interest if people found guilty of breaking the law return as lawmakers.

"Once convicted, how can people come back to Parliament and legislatures? There is an apparent conflict of interest," Justice Dipankar Datta, heading a Bench comprising Justice Manmohan, had observed.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

Ukraine, U.S. agree on a preliminary minerals deal

Associated Press
KYIV

A framework economic deal with the U.S. is ready, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Wednesday, but U.S. security guarantees that Kyiv views as vital for its war with Russia remain to be decided and a full agreement could hinge on talks in Washington as early as Friday.

The deal is a preliminary step toward a comprehensive agreement that will be subject to ratification by Ukraine's parliament, Mr. Zelenskyy said during a press conference.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal also confirmed that they have reached a preliminary agreement on a broad economic deal that includes U.S. access to Ukraine's rare earth minerals.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

Shivakumar makes it clear that he is in no mood to relinquish KPCC chief's post

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar addressing the media at his house in Bengaluru on Wednesday.

Despite pressure from loyalists of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to replace the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president, Deputy Chief Minister and incumbent State chief of the party D.K. Shivakumar seems unlikely to relinquish the post.

Combative mood

Mr. Shivakumar, who met the party's central leaders in Delhi on Tuesday, was in a combative mood on Wednesday and asserted the necessity of his leadership to the party in all the coming elections, from rural and urban local bodies to the next Legislative Assembly elections. The Deputy Chief Minister asserted that he and Mr. Siddaramaiah "will take the party forward under collective leadership."

The high command, which listened to Mr. Shivakumar's views on the functioning of the party and the State government, also seems to be in no mood to change the KPCC leadership in the present circumstances.

It is being speculated that "some formula" had been worked out between Mr. Shivakumar and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on the change of guard after 30 months of the Congress government. Ministers loyal to the Chief Minister, meanwhile, are pressing for implementation of the party's Udaipur meeting resolution on 'one man, one post', which is a veiled attempt to corner Mr. Shivakumar, who is both Deputy Chief Minister, Minister with powerful portfolios, and is also heading the State Congress unit.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 7

T.N. CM trying to turn NEP into a campaign issue: Union Minister

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

Jayant Chaudhary

Minister of State for Education Jayant Chaudhary waded into the three-language formula controversy on Wednesday, accusing Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin of doublespeak.

He alleged that the DMK leader was trying to convert the language issue into a political campaign, with an eye on the 2026 Assembly polls in the State.

Mr. Stalin's remark that he was prepared for a "language war" over the National Eduction Policy (NEP) and the three-language formula it espoused amounted to a denial of opportunities to the youth of Tamil Nadu, he said.

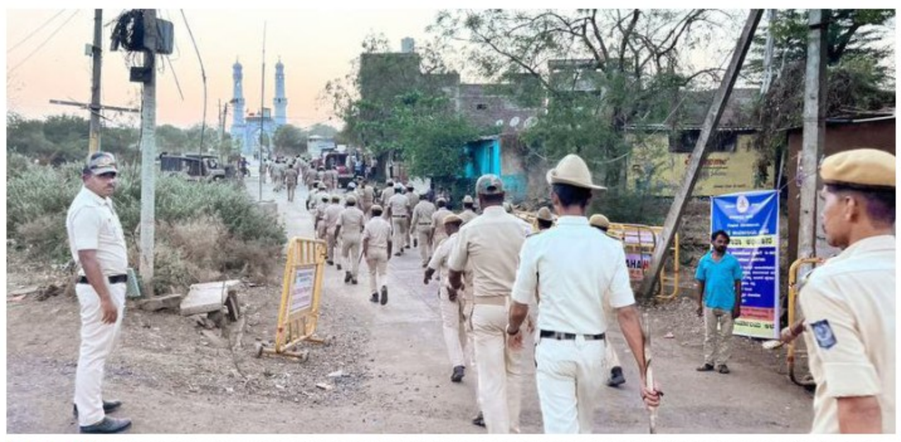
"Mr. Stalin himself knows four languages and is multilingual. Why is he then determined to block the way for the youth," he asked. He said that talk of a language war does not square with the DMK's ideological rhetoric.

"You cannot keep saying that you are arbiters of liberal, progressive, and constitutional values while at the same time exhibiting illiberalism with regard to language," he said.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

Puja performed on Aland dargah premises amid tight security

The Hindu Bureau
KALABURAGI



On alert: The police made elaborate security arrangements for the special puja to 'Raghava Chaitanya Shivalinga' in Aland town to mark Mahashivaratri on Wednesday. ARUN KULKARNI

Mahashivaratri puja was performed to 'Raghava Chaitanya Shivalinga' located on the Hazrat Ladle Mashak Dargah premises in Aland town of Kalaburagi district amid tight security arrangements on Wednesday.

A 15-member team led by Veerabhadra Shivacharya Swami of Kadaganchi Mutt, vice-president of Vishwa Hindu Parishad-North Karnataka region Lingaraj Appa, former BJP district (Rural) president Shivaraj Patil Raddewadagi, among others, performed the special puja.

Meanwhile, Sri Rama Sene founder Pramod Muthalik, who reached Aland town on Wednesday to participate in the Shivalinga puja, was restricted from entering the site by the district authorities. On Tuesday, the High Court said that the national honorary president of Sri Rama Sene Siddalinga Swami would not be allowed to participate in the puja.

Nearly 1,000 police personnel, including senior officers, Karnataka State Reserve Police battalions, District Armed Reserve battalions and others, were deployed. Prohibitory orders, imposed in the town from 6 a.m. on Wednesday, will be in force till 6 a.m. on Thursday. The town wore a deserted look with empty roads and shops remaining closed.

Earlier, the waqf board had argued that no Shivalinga existed at the site on the dargah premises. However, the High Court of Karnataka in Kalaburagi ordered a site inspection and historical verification before granting permission for performing puja to 'Raghava Chaitanya Shivalinga'.

Psychologist sentenced to 10 years for stealing newborn from hospital

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The 50th Additional City and Session Court has convicted a 35-year-old psychologist working at a private hospital on Bannerghatta Road and sentenced her to 10 years imprisonment and a fine of ₹1 lakh for allegedly stealing a newborn boy from a BBMP hospital at Chamarajpet to sell it to the mother of her patient for a price of ₹15 lakh in 2020.

The investigating officer in the case said it was a meticulous plan hatched by Rashmi, who was practising in a private hospital in Hubballi, who lured the mother of one of her patients and offered to get a baby through surrogacy. The accused got her husband to get tests done and borrowed money on the pretext of medical expenses. She, however, used the money to repay her personal and home loan in 2019.

When Rashmi failed to get a baby even after one year, the couple started pressuring her and threatened to file a police complaint, prompting her to come to Bengaluru and search government hospitals for a week asking poor parents of newborns to sell their babies.

When nothing materialised, she decided to steal a baby. She visited the Chamarajpet hospital, stole the baby boy and walked away. Husna Banu, mother of the baby boy, was shocked and created a ruckus as her baby was stolen from the hospital two hours after he was born.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 2

M BG-BGE

There's an additional buzz now if they realise I am competing

Navdeep, who clinched javelin title at the Nationals in Chennai, spoke about how his achievements helped people with dwarfism gain respect; with the World Championships being held in India for the first time, the Paris Paralympics gold medallist is eager to put his best foot forward and hopes that it will help fans see the Paralympians in good light

REUTERS

INTERVIEW

NAVDEEP SINGH

K. Keerthivasan

Midway through his event at the National Para Athletics Championships in Chennai recently, Navdeep Singh – India's gold medallist in the javelin throw (T41 class for athletes with short stature) at the Paris Paralympics – was fairly relaxed.

Seated in the company of the chief coach of the Indian national team Satyanarayana and Nishad Kumar, the men's high jump silver medallist in Paris, Navdeep was eager to begin a season that will see several important international events come India's way on a victorious note.

A throw of 47.32m in the French capital won him the gold medal and a Paralympic record. In Chennai, however, Navdeep could manage only 39.93m for the same outcome.

While understandably not happy with the distance, Navdeep is always the glass-half-full type of athlete. His focus is firmly on the World Championships in September this year and the LA Paralympics in 2028.

While the big picture dictates his day-to-day life, Navdeep has not forgotten to savour the renewed interest in and veneration of para-sport, particularly after India's record-breaking 29-medal campaign in Paris last year.

"The respect we are getting now. I am really liking it," he said. **Excerpts:**

How has life changed after the gold medal at the Paris Paralympics?

The main thing is the change that has come about. People of short stature used to be considered a laughing stock. I am really happy with the change in perspective on that front. Our community and our nation now recognises us for our talent and I truly appreciate that. No one knew me before this gold medal and now everyone does. It is a big deal for me and those from my community. We used to hide ourselves from society, but now we can be free with our heads held high.

Has the perspective around dwarfism and people of short stature in society changed at all?

I think yes. I've done a lot of podcasts of late and I've spoken quite openly about the problems and discrimination I faced. In our community, our problems are similar. I raised my voice and used my platform to shed light on our issues and for greater awareness. For a long time, we were never asked how we felt. The thinking of the larger society was often imposed on us.

People with dwarfism were generally associated with jokers in a circus. It was a very myopic way of thinking, but it has changed. A while back, a friend of mine told me that some of his acquaintances mistook him for me and kept calling him 'Navdeep' while approaching him for photographs. Even in that kind of misunderstanding, there's a level of respect involved with what they're associating me with and that makes me feel very good.

Amid all the international events on the calendar now, what space does the Para Nationals occupy? How important is it?

We are usually able to participate only in one or two domestic competitions. Usually, it's the Khelo India Games and the Nationals. In an ideal world, I'd want to play as many competitions as possible, particularly at the domestic level because we can see the kind of talent coming through in our sport. It's a good opportunity to see how much awareness people have of para-sport. The standard of competition in India is getting better. There's an additional buzz now if they realise I am competing, which makes me very happy. It helps build awareness also.

How do you handle criticism? Are you seeing the same people who criticised you earlier praising you now?

If I talk about individual incidents, it will offend others. It is not right to reveal such incidents. But yes, there were problems, which people like us had to face and endure. Players like us and the sport itself have proved that you will win only if you fight. Even if we don't win, we will learn. We have

B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

more than proved that we are no less than anyone. No one can stop your ability, except you. When you consider yourself independent, you will be able to open up better and showcase your capabilities.

As you mentioned, the Nationals are an important event and your presence is important for emerging athletes as well. What did your preparations for Chennai look like and are you happy with your performance?

(Laughs) I am a little sad about my performance here because my target was something else. I wanted to touch 40m at any cost. But it's alright. Coming from the off-season, my training load wasn't too high. I can go ahead and work on the mistakes and technical elements of my throw and keep going forward.

Are you participating in the Grand Prix from April 8 to 13? How important is the Grand Prix for you in preparation for the World Championships?

First of all, such a big event is happening in India for the first time, so it's a big deal. The people of India should see our event and they should understand how we Paralympians compete. I will definitely participate.

Going back a bit, when did you decide to take up athletics?

I played my first Javelin competition in the Nationals in 2016 in Panchkula. But my first Nationals was in 2012 after which I began training properly. My sports career had started much earlier but it all got organised post 2016.

You finished fourth in the Tokyo Paralympics. Were you disappointed and how did you deal with the phase?

I had a lot of questions as to why I couldn't do it when everything was in my favour. I had a lot of reasons but when I shared my reasons with my close friends, they told me that no matter what I say or what reasons I give, they may come off as excuses. It's better to prove myself on the field instead. I took that as a source of motivation rather than becoming depressed with the results in Tokyo.

What changes, both technical and psychological, did you undergo from Tokyo to Paris?

I worked on all possible elements – physical, technical and psychological – because I knew I had a thirst to improve. I was a very young athlete and those with me in the Paralympics were all seniors.

So it was an opportunity for me to gain experience while spending time with them and seeing what they do. I was able to see how competition works, how it helps an athlete and what all I could draw from these events.

Any particular tweaks you made in the run-up to the Paris Games that helped bring that medal?

I kept my mobile phone away. Initially, it was difficult. In today's time, the phone is a big problem. It turned out to be a good decision. I didn't have a medal in the previous Paralympics so no one was calling me. I didn't have to worry about missing important calls before my event (laughs). The time is nearing to turn the phone off again.

Has the state of differently-abled athletes changed for the better?

The change is tangible. Look at the numbers in the Paralympics over the years. We had four medals in Rio 2016, 19 medals in 2021 Tokyo and then 29 in 2024. Progress is definitely being made. One good thing has been that athletes who finished fourth in the previous Paralympics in Japan managed to step up to the podium and bring home medals. We had a high bronze medal account in Paris too – 13. Even our fourth and fifth place finishers have all been performing better. The goal now is to turn those bronze medals to silver and gold and the Federation is working hard towards that.

What change do you want to see in para-athletics?

Things are going fairly well now. I think the basics should be focused on. If the food served for athletes at events can be less oily and more nutritionally aligned with what athletes will need, that would be great for the sportspersons in the ecosystem.

Whenever I have people coming up to me asking about how life in sports is, I always encourage them to give it a try. Either they will go on to bring laurels for themselves and the country and earn recognition and respect, or at the very least, it will do tremendous good for their health. So the idea is to always encourage anyone interested in sport to actually take it up.

Have you been able to exchange notes on javelin with Neeraj Chopra?

We met at an event organised by the Reliance Foundation once. It was a very official meeting and there wasn't time to chat about much. We have spoken on the phone here and there, but technique and technical tips are not conversations you can have over the phone. If we get an opportunity to sit down and discuss it someday, that would be nice.

Are you eyeing the 50m mark?

For me, the idea is to always keep improving on my personal best and keep poking at the world record. I haven't kept a target distance in mind. My main focus is the World Championships and the LA Paralympics in 2028.

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PCKL to use AI and ML for electricity supply to irrigation pump sets

Since July 2024, they are being used for daily and monthly forecast of energy demand in the State

Jahnavi T. R.
BENGALURU

With the agricultural requirement of electricity going up every day due to hot weather, the Power Company of Karnataka Limited (PCKL) will use artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) to study crop patterns and provide energy accordingly.

"We are planning to do a cropping pattern survey study to assess electricity demand of crops and irrigation pump (IP) sets. We will also know which time and for what period the crop will need water. Based on the findings, we can release energy for specific IP sets. We will take this up on a trial basis first in a specific region and then expand it to a full-fledged project based on results," Lokhande Snehal Sudhakar, managing director, Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited (KPTCL) said, "Improved forecasting helps utilities source their power more efficiently by allowing them to estimate deficit/surplus across 96 fifteen-minute time blocks with higher accuracy, which in turn helps to optimise sourcing of power."

PCKL will do a cropping pattern survey study to assess electricity demand of crops and irrigation pump sets. Based on the findings, energy will be released for specific IP sets. FILE PHOTO

AI-ML benefits

- July 17–31, 2024 **Profit: ₹14.14 crore**
- August 2024 **Profit: ₹9.12 crore**
- September 2024 **Profit: ₹47.99 crore**
- Total: **₹71.25 crore**
- Overall realised **profits: ₹192.97 crore**

Source: KPTCL

According to the data provided by KPTCL, in 2.5 months (July 17, 2024 to September 30, 2024) due to the impact of AI and ML, the total realised profit was ₹192.97 crore.

Out of this, ₹71.25 crore was purely AI and ML contribution.

Daily, monthly forecast

"When it comes to daily and monthly forecast, our predictions are quite accurate, and we have around 5-10% error margin. Our main aim with the project is to manage supply and demand.," Mr. Sudhakar said. The systems are also being used to forecast renewable energy generation which will help in better purchasing and selling of power. While the accuracy is on higher levels for solar generation, wind forecasting has proven to be tricky.

"It is essential to recognise that wind power is highly volatile and unpredictable. For instance, wind generation in Karnataka could be at 3,000 MW in one hour, drop to 300 MW the next, and then surge back to 3,000 or even 4,000 MW depending on changing wind conditions," Mr. Pandey said.

"This extreme fluctuation poses significant challenges to grid management and sourcing, leading to financial implications for the energy system and distribution companies, ultimately resulting in higher tariffs for consumers," he added.

tor, PCKL, told *The Hindu*.

He also said that the programme will first be run on AI and then a pilot district will be selected for implementation. With the demand in summer season expected to go beyond 18,500 Megawatts (MW), the company also expects more energy demand for rabi crops.

From July 17, 2024, the Energy Department has been making use of AI and ML for daily and monthly forecasting of energy demand in the State. While it was first taken up as a pilot project for a period of six months, it is being used in a full-fledged manner now.

Source efficiently

Speaking about the benefits of improved forecasting, Pankaj Kumar Pandey,

KITE second edition being held after seven-year hiatus

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday appealed to citizens to promote tourism in the State with pride. He was speaking at the inauguration of Karnataka International Tourism Expo (KITE) 2025.

"The people of Karnataka should be the tourism ambassadors of the State. They should warmly welcome visitors and showcase our culture with pride," he said. He also reaffirmed that the government was committed to providing all the opportunities for private investors for ease of business in the tourism sector.

"We have allocated ₹440 crore for tourism in the last two years. We recently also launched the Tourism Policy 2025-29 for which the budget is ₹1,350 crore. As a government, we recognise the immense potential of the tourism sector in driving Karnataka's economic progress. So, we have taken steps to ensure that Karnataka remains a premium travel destination," Mr. Siddaramaiah said.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Minister of Tourism H.K. Patil, among others, during the Karnataka International Travel Expo 2025 inauguration in Bengaluru on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Tourist arrival in 2024

30 crore	4.85 lakh
from within India	from abroad

Tourism features

- **4** UNESCO world heritage sites
- **320 km** coastline
- **40** national parks
- **600** ASI-protected monuments
- **17** hill stations
- **40** waterfalls

The second edition of KITE is being held between February 26 and 28 after seven years. On February 27 and 28, business meetings will be held at Bangalore International Exhibition Centre. The first edition of KITE was held in 2018.

The event aims to bring together tourism and hospitality industry stakeholders from India and abroad and provide them with B2B opportunities. Along with 150 stakeholders from the State, 400 buyers from India and abroad will participate. Minister of Tourism, Law and Parliamentary Affairs H.K. Patil called on the industry stakeholders to lead the way forward during the next edition.

From Page One

Psychologist sentenced to 10 years imprisonment

Rashmi had allegedly taken all precautionary measures and worn a mask and scarf to hide her identity.

The parents filed a complaint, and the case made headlines as the newborn was stolen from the hospital during COVID-19 pandemic amid security. The case did not see any progress even after six months, prompting the department to suspend the investigating officer before transferring the case to Basavanagudi women's police station.

The case was handed over to sub-inspector K.R. Srinivas, who gathered call details of the nearest tower dump of 1,500 phone calls and footage of over 500 CCTV cameras.

After verifying hundreds of photos from the CCTV camera footage, the police got a small clue of the mobile phone model, which matched the call record details (CDR) that had raised suspicion. The photos of the mobile number owner was then collected.

The team further analysed the CDR and found that many phone calls were made to the mother of Rashmi's patient. The police checked the number and found that she had put the photo of the stolen baby in her display photo. The baby's picture was further corroborated with the actual parents, and after confirmation, the police rushed to their house and rescued the baby.

The police did not press any charges against the couple as they were made to believe that they got the baby through surrogacy and with all legal formalities.

Appreciating the good piece of investigation, the investigating officer, Mr. Srinivas, was awarded the Chief Minister's medal.

Steps initiated to contain bird flu

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

The Belagavi district administration has initiated a series of measures to contain H5N1 Avian influenza or Bird Flu. After the H5N1 bird flu was detected in Udayagiri, in the neighbouring state of Maharashtra, the administration has initiated several measures. They include screening of samples in individual and company farms and setting up check posts at inter state borders. According to the 20th livestock census, there are 26.40 lakh broilers or egg laying chickens in district.As per the safety protocol issued by Union government, seven check posts have been set up on the borders.

'Fear of bird flu, hot weather affect chicken price, sales'

Anupama Mani
Sutapa Dey
BENGALURU

The outbreak of bird flu in Andhra Pradesh and the belief that consumption of chicken during summer will have an adverse effect on health has led to a reduction in demand for chicken in Bengaluru's meat markets. This has also led to the price of chicken fall by ₹10 - 15 per kg.

Meat sellers said that the panic induced by bird flu this time around is not as bad as it was in 2018 when there was an outbreak in Karnataka and Bengaluru. "While mutton sales have been stable, both the price and sales of chicken have been affected in the last few days. More than the fear of bird flu, people are buying less chicken as it is already so hot in Bengaluru," said Suhaib Ur Rehman K., Co-founder of Protein Fresh, Shivajinagar. Suhas S.R. from Banashankari Agro Farms LLP noted that individual farmers and companies have faced large-scale losses after the outbreak of the flu.

Traders said that they were conducting strict quality checks of chicken before selling them to customers. Ganesh Shetty, the owner of Every Piece Meat, Marathahalli, stated that they buy from reputed chicken farms which ensure customer safety.

Representatives from the Karnataka Poultry Farmers and Broilers Association (KPFBA) said that the Poultry Breeders Coordination Association, along with the Karnataka government, have taken some actions and precautions to ensure the safety of consumers. "Karnataka government has completely restricted the State-to-state poultry transportation but has not issued any advisory till date," said Mahesh Kumar Yadav from KPFBA.

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Corrigendum to E-Tender No.: CPMGSU-2024-10 Dated: 22.01.2025
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following works:

Item of work	Approx. Value
Request for Proposal (RFP) for Appointment of General Consultants (GC) for the various projects of Gati Shakti Mysuru Unit.	Rs. 6,03,36,769.40

Last date for submission of bids: **Upto 15:00 Hrs. on 21.03.2025**
For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in
Chief Project Manager / Gati Shakti Unit / Mysuru
PUB/815/AAMO/PRB/SWR/2024-25
South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRRLY

Interview Notice
Applications are invited for following post on Short Term basis as per schedule given below:-

Sr. No.	Name of Post	No. of Post	Last Date of submission of application	Place of interview
1.	Young Professional-II (ICAR-NISST, RS, Bengaluru)	01	04.03.2025	ICAR-NISST, RS, Bengaluru

For details, please visit our website https://seedres.icar.gov.in/

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
(CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION)
DEPUTY CHIEFENGINEER (CONSTRUCTION-I)/TRIVANDRUM
TENDER NOTICE NO. 01-DYCE-CN-I-TVC-2025 DATED 22/02/2025
Name of work: Doubling of Track between Trivandrum and Kanniyakumari - Proposed construction of Precast Drain by pipe pushing across road beneath road embankment at Nagercoil Town station (NJT) end approach of ROB 289A between Eraniel station (ERL) and Nagercoil Town station (NJT) at KM 283/600-700.
Tender Value: ₹19,01,036.00 **Period of Completion:** 2 Months
Tender Closing date: 21/03/2025 **Earnest Money Deposit:** ₹ 38,000.00
Complete details and tender docement is available at **https://www.ireps.gov.in**
For further details refer Website address: **www.ireps.gov.in**
DYCE/CN/I/TVC

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ
(ಪಂಚಾಯತ್ ರಾಜ್ ಇಂಜಿನೀಯರಿಂಗ್ ಇಲಾಖೆ)
ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಾಹಕ ಅಭಿಯಂತರವರ ಕಾರ್ಯಾಲಯ, ಪಂಚಾಯತ್ ರಾಜ್ ಇಂಜಿನೀಯರಿಂಗ್ ವಿಭಾಗ,ವಿಜಯಪುರ
ದೂರವಾಣಿ ಸಂ:08352-277816, ಫ್ಯಾಕ್ಸ್:08352-277817
ಇ-ಮೇಲ್:zpebjp9@yahoo.co.in
ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ:ಕಾಇಂ/ಪಂ.ರಾ.ಇ.ವಿ/ವಿಜ/ಇಪ್ರಾ/ಟೆಂಡರ್/2024-25/8300 ದಿನಾಂಕ:21.02.2025
ಇ-ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ
ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಾಹಕ ಇಂಜಿನೀಯರರು, ಪಂ.ರಾ.ಇಂ. ವಿಭಾಗ, ವಿಜಯಪುರ ಇವರು 2024-25ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನ 2024-25 ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನ ಸಕ್ಕರೆ ಕಾರ್ಖಾನೆಗಳ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯ ರಸ್ತೆ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಲೆಕ್ಕ ಶಿರ್ಷಿಕೆ ಯೋಜನೆಯಡಿಯಲ್ಲಿ **ಸಾಮಾನ್ಯ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರ: 11** ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳು **ಪ್ರವರ್ಗ-1 ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರ 1** ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳು **ಪ್ರವರ್ಗ-2(ಎ) ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರ 3** ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳು **ಪರಿಶಿಷ್ಟ ಜಾತಿ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರ 4** ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳು **ಪರಿಶಿಷ್ಟ ಪಂಗಡ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರ 1** ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳು **ರೂ. 10.00 ಲಕ್ಷದಿಂದ ರೂ.80.00 ಲಕ್ಷಗಳವರೆಗೆ ಒಟ್ಟು 20 ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳಿಗೆ** ಕೆ.ಡಬ್ಲೂ-1, 2 ಹಾಗೂ 3 ರ ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಈ ಕಚೇರಿಯ ಟೆಂಡರ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ **ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 8300 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 21.02.2025** ರಂತೆ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳನ್ನು ಇ-ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನ್ನು ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಿದ್ದು. ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ. ಪ್ರೋಟಲ್ ಮುಖಾಂತರ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನ್ನು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವ ಕೊನೆಯ **ದಿನಾಂಕ: 03.03.2025** ಸಾಯಂಕಾಲ 5.30 ಗಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ ಮಾತ್ರ ನಿಗದಿಪಡಿಸಿರುತ್ತದೆ. ಟೆಂಡರಿನ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಾಗಿ ವೆಬ್ ಸೈಟ್ www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in ನಲ್ಲಿ ಅಥವಾ ಕಛೇರಿ ಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಸದರಿ ವಿಭಾಗ ಕಾರ್ಯಾಲಯಕ್ಕೆ ಭೇಟಿ ನೀಡಿ ಮಾಹಿತಿ ಸಂಗ್ರಹಿಸಬಹುದು.
ಸಹಿ/- ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಾಹಕ ಇಂಜಿನೀಯರರು, ಪಂ.ರಾ.ಇಂ. ವಿಭಾಗ, ವಿಜಯಪುರ.
ವಾಸಾಸಂ೨/ವಿಜಯಪುರ/722/ಕೆಎಸ್‌ಎಂಸಿಎ/2024-25

EDUCATION HUB

A Business Initiative

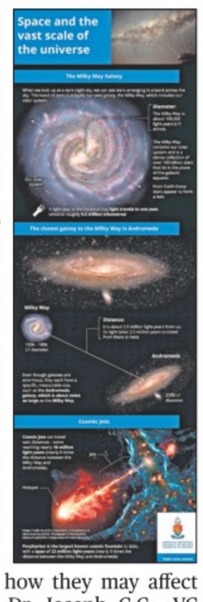
Felicitation ceremony organised by Dr. Ambedkar Institute of Technology to honor the cadets of the National Cadet Corps

Dr. Ambedkar Institute of Technology proudly organized a felicitation ceremony to honor the cadets of the NCC 11/2 Coy, 2 Kar Batallion who represented the college at the prestigious Republic Day Camp 2025 in New Delhi. The event was graced by the Honorable Secretary of PVPWT, Sri S. Shivamallu, Principal, Dr. M. N. Thippeswamy, and VP, Dr. Siddaraju, along with faculty members, students, NCC Caretaking Officer Praveen K B, and the proud parents of the cadets. The institute honored Junior Under Officer VISHWAS N, 5th sem Dept of AIML, who showcased exemplary performance by participating in the South Zone Prime Minister's Rally, and Sergeant SHRUTHI K M,5th sem Dept of CSE who represented the Karnataka and Goa Directorate as the lead singer in cultural events and brought pride to the institution by winning a gold medal in Group Dance Singing. The dignitaries highly commended their dedication, discipline, and outstanding achievements. The institute also honored the parents, acknowledging their unwavering support and encouragement. The cadets shared their inspiring journey. The dignitaries encouraged other students to follow in their footsteps. The event concluded with a sense of pride and admiration, celebrating the institute's commitment to nurturing future leaders and recognizing the families who stand behind them.

Christ University hosts 8th National Young Entrepreneurs Summit

Christ (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru, organized a three-day national young entrepreneur's summit, YESUMMIT-2025, at the Kengeri campus of the University. The event was organized in association with the Youth Aid Foundation, Pune. A total of 450 participants, including 150 pitch teams of young entrepreneurs from various parts of the country participated in this national event. The summit brings together aspiring young entrepreneurs, industry experts, and academicians to exchange ideas, explore business innovations, and foster a culture of entrepreneurship. The summit was inaugurated with the traditional lighting of the lamp by Dr Fr Jossy P George, Director, CHRIST Incubation Centre, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Mr Nageshwara Rao N, Technical Advisor, Karnataka Skill Development Authority, Mr Abbas Panju, Mr Sunil P P and a host of dignitaries present. The event, which was conducted over three days, inspired young entrepreneurs, respected business leaders, and entrepreneurship practitioners to attend multi-formatted interactive sessions, pitch in an innovative competition, and participate in a lifelong learning experience in entrepreneurship. The summit promises to be an occasion of connection, innovation and celebration.

Breakthrough Study on Giant Radio Galaxies (led by University of Pretoria and Christ University Researchers)



Giant Radio Galaxies (GRGs) in the cosmos grow into 'giants' due to their high speeds and low-density environments, according to a breakthrough study. It offers new insights into a galaxy's evolution and how they may affect conditions for sustaining life. The study has been conducted by an international team, led by Dr. Gourab Giri (University of Pretoria) and Prof. Joydeep Bagchi (Christ University, Bengaluru). The team includes researchers from the University of Pretoria and University of Cape Town in South Africa and the Inter University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) in India. The paper is published in the prestigious Astronomy and Astrophysics journal. Giant Radio Galaxies (GRGs) in the cosmos grow into 'giants' due to their high speeds and low-density environments, according to a breakthrough study. It offers new insights into a galaxy's evolution and how they may affect conditions for sustaining life. Father Dr. Joseph C.C., VC of Christ University, Bengaluru, states: "This achievement highlights the institution's commitment to advancing fundamental research in astronomy and astrophysics. The collaboration between Christ University in India and Universities in South Africa in cutting-edge astrophysics has proven to be highly impactful, and we must continue to enhance it through joint initiatives, shared resources, and the exchange of expertise. Christ University is proud to contribute to such ground-breaking discoveries that expand our understanding of the cosmos and inspire future generations of scientists."

Journalist Rajdeep Sardesai launches his book at Presidency University

Renowned journalist ,TV anchor and author of several books, Mr Rajdeep Sardesai did a special launch and discussion of his new book ''2024 The Election That Surprised India'' at Presidency University Bengaluru. He urged the students to speak up on issues that matter. Addressing the large audience that had gathered to listen to one of the most popular faces of the television news industry, he shared interesting anecdotes from his book and journalism journey of almost 4 decades. The students of Presidency University had several questions to ask and Rajdeep patiently answered all .He discussed the importance of real journalism and how every true story needs to be told . Being a die hard Kishore Kumar fan and an ardent follower of cricket ,Rajdeep said that these two hobbies help him in unwinding after every hectic election coverage or breaking news scenario. Applauding the vision and leadership of the Chancellor of Presidency University , Dr. Nissar Ahmed ,Rajdeep told the students to appreciate the fact that they are part of a campus that has representation from all states of India and celebrate this unity in diversity. VC Prof. Vijayan Immanuel ,Pro VC Dr. Vidya Shankar Shetty and Registrar Dr. Sameena Noor Ahmed Panali were also present on this occasion.

Man held for beating wife to death; family tries to cover up

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Doddaballapura Rural Police arrested a 50-year-old man for allegedly beating his wife to death on the outskirts of Doddaballapura on Wednesday. The police stopped the deceased Radhamma's family from cremating her after receiving a tip-off. According to the police, on Sunday, Lakshmaiah attacked his wife, Radhamma, and beat her multiple times. The accused fled soon after.

The next day, her family and relatives decided to cremate her allegedly fearing ill repute.

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, RANJITH.K, S/o Kandoji Rao, R/at #812/9A, Hondada Circle, Kyipete, Davanagere-577001, Karnataka, have changed my name from Ranjith.K to Ranajith K Ghorpade vide affidavit dated 25-02-2025 sworn before Notary K.S.Giridhar, Bengaluru.

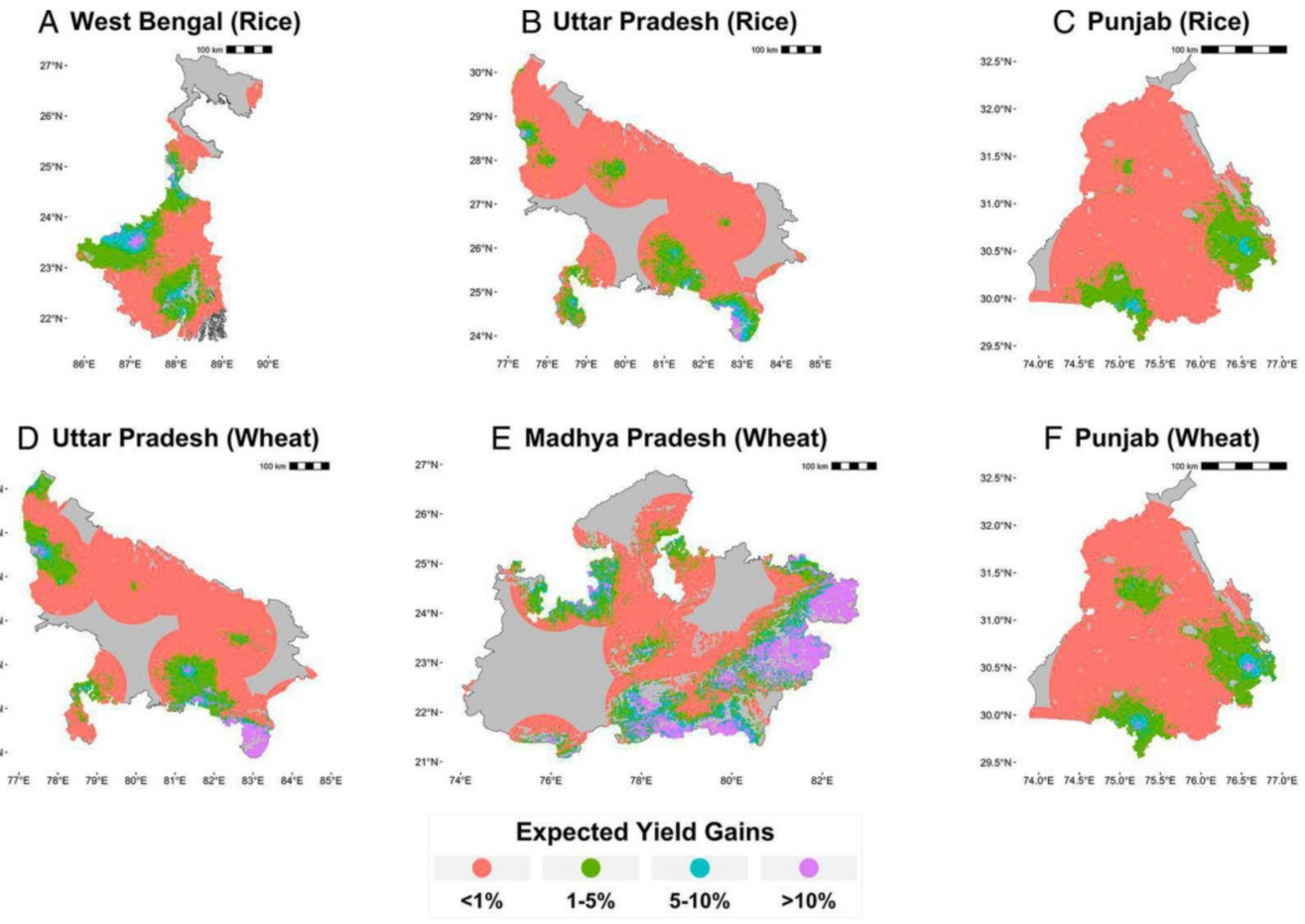
I, NAVAZ Pasha, S/o Shek Basha, R/at No. 182, Razacka Sab Palya, Bagalur, Bangalore-562149, have changed my name from Navaz Pasha to Nawaz Pasha vide affidavit dated 25-02-2025 sworn before Notary Y.R.Chandrasekar, Bangalore.

CENTRAL RAILWAY
SOLAPUR DIVISION
E-TENDER NOTICE
The Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer, General, Central Railway, Solapur, for and on behalf of the President of India invites online e-tenders on Railways e-procurement website **www.ireps.gov.in** from reputed, experienced & Licensed Electrical contractors for the following works. **Tender No.: SUR/L/T/2024/40R1 Name of work:** Electrical General Service portion of work in connection of Direct metering of Residential Staff quarters along with Street lights, Staircase lighting, Pump Rooms of Wadi Section of Solapur division (Re-invitation). **Estimated cost:** ₹ 28,11,151.54/- **Bid Security:** ₹ 56,200.00/- **Completion Period:** 12 Months **Validity of offer:** 60 Days **Date & time of tenders closing on website:** 21/03/2025 at 15.00 hours. Bid Security cost shall be paid through e-payment on **www.ireps.gov.in** website. **ANJ-38**
अनाधिकृत रूप से रेल लाइन को पार करना दंडनीय अपराध है

Coal-fired power plants in India cut rice, wheat yield by up to 10%

Nitrogen oxides are a side effect of India's coal dependence. They are phytotoxic, meaning they stress plants, and have been known to hinder cellular function and worsen crop damage. A new study has attempted to link the two in a 'systematic way at the power-plant level'

Ashmita Gupta



Expected yield gains from eliminating coal-attributable nitrogen dioxide concentrations in major rice- and wheat-producing states. Large tracts of cropland in all key states are expected to see yield improvements of 1% from eliminating coal-related NO2. Data from 2019 growing seasons. PNAS: 122 (6) E2421679122

According to new research led by researchers at Stanford University in the U.S., coal-fired power plants are quietly depleting India's rice and wheat output, destroying up to 10% of the yield in several States.

The emissions from coal power plants include carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides, fly ash, soot, suspended particulate matter, and other trace gases. These pollutants have been linked to smog, acid rain, eutrophication and various other environmental burdens.

An elusive link

In the new study, PhD student Kirat Singh and his colleagues turned the spotlight on the less-explored consequences of nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) on crop productivity.

The nitrogen oxides in general are an established side effect of India's coal dependence. They are phytotoxic, meaning they stress plants, and have been known to hinder cellular function and interfere with crucial enzymatic activities. The oxides also contribute to the formation of ozone, which in turn exacerbates crop damage and produces particulate matter that limits the amount of sunlight available for photosynthesis.

"We know that coal-fired power plants contribute significantly to air pollution," Singh said. "And we also know from past studies that various pollutants, including NO_2, can negatively impact crop growth. But there hadn't been a study linking the two in a systematic way at the power-plant level, particularly in India."

Tracking plant health

To compensate for the lack of ground monitoring stations in agricultural areas, the researchers used data from satellite images to glean high-resolution insights into NO_2 concentration across India. Since multiple power plants contribute to NO_2 pollution across different distances, the researchers summed up all coal-attributable NO_2 emissions reaching each location instead of isolating individual sources. This approach gave them a comprehensive picture of the amount of pollution to which agricultural regions were exposed.

Then, to estimate how NO_2 from coal-fired power plants affected crop yield, the researchers turned to a satellite-derived vegetation index. They used a physical signal called near-infrared reflectance of vegetation (NIRv) as a proxy for plant health. NIRv measures greenness. Healthy crops are richer in chlorophyll, which cannot be detected by visible light but is sensitive to near-infrared light. So a higher percentage of near-infrared light is reflected by leaves in healthy plants.

Using pre-established coefficients, the researchers could link NO_2 levels, measured by the TROPOMI satellite, to changes in NIRv. They used India-specific coefficients of 0.0006 for monsoon rice and 0.0007 for winter wheat. For every 1 mol/m^2 increase in NO_2, for example, the corresponding drop in NIRv was 0.0006 and 0.0007, respectively.

Prior research has already shown a linear relationship between NIRv and crop yield, allowing the researchers to directly estimate how much yield was lost due to pollution. They set a baseline NIRv of 0.007, representing zero crop growth, and calculated the percentage decrease in yield based on pollution-driven declines in greenness. This method helped them quantify the agricultural damage wrought by NO_2 without requiring physical field measurements.

Blowin' in the wind

They also analysed wind patterns to differentiate between pollution from coal plants and other industrial and environmental sources. This step helped the team unravel major differences in the effects of coal pollution across States.

For example, Chhattisgarh, a major hub for coal-fired power, had the highest share of NO_2 pollution from coal plants: about 19% of NO_2 detected in the monsoon season and 12.5% in winter came from coal plants.

Surprisingly, Uttar Pradesh had high overall NO_2 levels but only a small portion of that came from coal power, while Tamil Nadu had relatively low NO_2 pollution but the bulk of it came from coal power.

Coal's contribution to air pollution thus varied by region. Not all power plants have the same impact: those located near fertile farmland with a high emissions exposure caused the most agricultural damage, Singh said.

The researchers turned the spotlight on the less-explored consequences of nitrogen dioxide on crop productivity. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Targeting highly polluting plants could have significant benefits for agricultural productivity. The yield of 5.7% of cropland in West Bengal near coal-fired power stations could increase 5-10%

An overlooked loss

Crop damage intensity – measured as monetised loss per gigawatt-hour (GWh) of electricity generated – for wheat and rice touched up to $17,370/GWh (₹15 lakh on February 6, 2025) and $13,420/GWh (₹11.7 lakh) respectively.

About 20% of coal-fired electricity generation during the monsoon season accounted for half of all coal NO_2-related rice losses while 12% of total winter season generation was linked to 50% of wheat losses.

This suggested that targeting a relatively small subset of highly polluting power stations could still have significant benefits for agricultural productivity.

To wit, as per the study, the yield of 5.7% of cropland in West Bengal near coal-fired power stations could increase 5-10% while the gains of 1.66% could exceed 10%.

Similarly in Madhya Pradesh, the yield in 5.9% of cropland could increase 5-10% yield gains and another 11.9% could gain by more than 10%.

To compare, the annual yield growth for kharif rice and rabi wheat has averaged just 1.7% and 1.5% respectively between 2011 to 2020.

According to the study, India's rice production could gain $420 million a year and wheat $400 million a year, roughly ₹7,000 crore in total.

India and coal

As the 2025-2026 Economic Survey as well as energy experts have noted, coal power plays a crucial role in India's growth at the moment. The 2025-2026 Union Budget has allocated 255% more for the Ministry of Coal over revised estimates of FY 2024-2025.

India's demand for food is soaring as well. In 2024, the Global Hunger Index ranked India 105th out of 127 countries on food security. Rice and wheat are staple crops in India and in many parts of the world to which these grains are exported.

Singh said he hopes to inform policy reforms that will allow the coal and agricultural sectors to meet in the middle. "When you're crafting policy around controlling pollution from the power sector, considering crop impacts alongside health and greenhouse gas emissions can help policymakers prioritise where that pollution control equipment should be installed," he said.

"If you want to optimise the money that is being invested in installing all of this pollution-control equipment, you want to focus on power plants where it would bring the most benefit. Policymakers might find information in our research that could be helpful in terms of figuring out which power stations to prioritise," he added.

Singh grew up in New Delhi and said its poor air quality motivated him to study the consequences of air pollution on human as well as crop health.

He is planning to further study how coal power plants affect agriculture at large in India, including the effects of other pollutants on crop productivity.

(Ashmita Gupta is a science writer. ashmitagupta1321@gmail.com)

Environmental activists take part in a flash mob at Circo Massimo as the COP16 biodiversity conference resumes at the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organisation headquarters in Rome on February 25. AFP

Rebooted U.N. talks aim to 'unite world' by saving nature

Agence France-Presse

Global talks to protect nature restarted on February 25 with a call for humanity to come together to "sustain life on the planet" and overcome the deep divisions that caused a previous meeting last year to end in disarray. More than two years after a landmark deal on nature, including a pledge to protect 30% of the world's land and seas by 2030, nations continue to haggle over the money needed to reverse destruction that scientists say threatens a million species.

Negotiators meeting at the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organisation headquarters in Rome this week are tasked with breaking a deadlock on funding between rich and developing countries that saw COP16 talks in Cali, Colombia, break up without agreement in November. The talks come at a moment of geopolitical upheaval with countries facing a range of challenges, from trade tensions and debt worries to the war in Ukraine.

The re-election of U.S. President Donald Trump is also casting a shadow, despite Washington not having signed up to the U.N.'s Convention on Biological Diversity.

The mission to protect nature "has the power to unite the world," said COP16 president Susana Muhamad.

"And this is not something small in this very polarised, fragmented, divisive and conflicting geopolitical landscape," the Colombian environment minister added.

She urged countries "to work again together in a collaborative manner for something that probably is the most important purpose of humanity in the 21st century, which is our collective capacity to sustain life in this planet".

Developing nations want a new, dedicated fund. Wealthy nations led by the European Union, Japan, and Canada say setting up multiple funds fragments aid

Far from the record 23,000 participants at the Cali conference, the talks resumed in a smaller format, with 1,400 people accredited and just a few hundred country representatives at the opening plenary in a hall overlooking the rain-drenched ruins of Rome's Circus Maximus. Countries have until Thursday to hammer out a plan to reach a promised $200 billion a year in finance for nature by 2030, including $30 billion a year from wealthier countries to poorer ones.The squabble in Cali was mainly over the way in which that funding is delivered.

Developing nations led by Brazil and the African group want the creation of a new, dedicated biodiversity fund, saying they are not adequately represented in existing mechanisms. Wealthy nations led by the European Union, Japan, and Canada say setting up multiple funds fragments aid.

Last week, the COP16 presidency published a new text that proposed kicking the ultimate decision on a new biodiversity fund to future UN talks, while suggesting reforming existing financing for nature conservation.

Observers will be watching closely to see if developed countries, including those in budgetary crises like France and Germany, can be persuaded to agree.

In 2022, nations identified 23 goals to be achieved within the decade, aiming to protect the planet and its living creatures from deforestation, over-exploitation of resources, climate change, pollution, and invasive species.At stake are humanity's food resources and the health of the planet's life-sustaining ecosystems, with a quarter of the species for which there is solid scientific data already threatened with extinction.

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

Scientific terms beginning with 'v'

Vasudevan Mukunth

Please send in your answers to science@thehindu.co.in

QUESTION 1

In biology, this term denotes animals that are active in the evening. It has also found use in poetry, literature, and even astronomy, where it has been associated with Venus's appearance in the evening. Name the term.

QUESTION 2

This word is used to describe objects that are worm-shaped, such as parts of the human intestine and the shape of some leeches in water bodies. What's the word?

QUESTION 3

While ionic and covalent bonds are formed when atoms or molecules share electrons, a third kind of bond forms when nearby atoms or molecules are attracted to or repelled by each other by the shifting position of the electrons they hold. Name the force that results in this bond.

QUESTION 4

The immature egg cells produced by (sexual) females for reproduction are called oocytes. What's the name of the process by which the yolk forms within this cell?

QUESTION 5

___ is the name of a form of air pollution created when sulphur dioxide from a volcanic eruption reacts with oxygen, water, and sunlight, leaving an acidic cloud of aerosols hanging in the air. Fill in the blank.

Answers to February 25 quiz:

1. Non-SI units to measure radiation dose – **Ans: Rad and rem**
2. Source of low level radiation to which we're exposed – **Ans: Natural background radiation**
3. Chinese city with a high level of radiation from rocks – **Ans: Yangjiang**
4. Quantity that measures dangerous radiation dose for humans – **Ans: LD50**
5. Bacteria that can withstand high radiation doses – **Ans:** *Thermococcus gammatolerans*

Visual: **Louis Slotin**

First contact: Komal Nigam | K.N. Viswanathan | Dinesh Kumar | Smrutiranjan Sahoo | Brijraj Vala

Visual: This is a limestone rock formation in the White Desert National Park in Egypt. What are such rocks, which are faceted by sand and ice crystals carried in wind, called? CREDIT: PUBLIC DOMAIN

For feedback and suggestions
for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

A decade goes by as city still runs on an outdated master plan

The biggest impact of the absence of an updated RMP has been urban sprawl, say urban planners

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj
BENGALURU

The city has been running with an outdated master plan for a decade now as the Revised Master Plan (RMP), currently in force in Bengaluru, was supposed to expire and be replaced with another RMP in 2015, which never happened.

This has created a planning gap where unplanned development has taken over, causing myriad problems, urban planners say. In addition, it has been almost five years since the city had an elected council, only complicating things further.

"The biggest impact of the absence of an updated RMP has been urban sprawl, which makes per capita costs of providing and maintaining infrastructure all the more costly due to distance and less population density. Sprawl has worsened traffic congestion . RMP - 2015 clearly made a case for a compact city. While Bengaluru has lost the case for a compact city, further damage can be prevented through zoning regulations that incentivise re-building in core areas, supported by multiple modes of public transport. ," said urban planner Champaka Rajagopal, who was part of the team that worked on RMP - 2015.

The lack of expansion of the road network keeping pace with the expansion of the urban sprawl is also a direct impact of the lack of an updated master plan. Urban planners point out the case of Sarjapur, which has mostly developed over the last decade and still has terrible access roads.

A similar expansion of urban sprawl is seen on all key arterial roads like Kanakapura Road, Airport Road, and Mysuru Road, with no provision of water and sanitation, leave alone road network.

Timeline

- RMP - 2005, notified in 1995, was supposed to end in 2005. However, the plan was extended for two years as the new plan was not in place
- RMP – 2015 was notified on June 25, 2007, and was supposed to expire in 2015. However, it was extended till 2017, as the new plan was not in place
- Draft RMP - 2031 was published in 2017
- Draft RMP – 2031 was challenged in the High Court over procedural issues. The BMRCL published a Comprehensive Mobility Plan introducing Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) in 2020, forcing BDA to withdraw the Draft RMP – 2031 in 2020
- RMP – 2015 has been indefinitely extended till a new RMP comes into force

Ad-hoc mega projects

Meanwhile, Bengaluru Development Minister D. K. Shivakumar has been championing infrastructure projects worth ₹1 lakh crore for Bengaluru, which includes two tunnel roads, elevated corridors, double-decker flyover-cum-metro corridors, roads in buffer zones of Storm Water Drains, etc., to expand the road network of the city.

"Ground level surveys during planning throws up problems that we need to solve, either through these projects or maybe through other solutions like increasing public transport. These projects may not be the ideal solutions. However, these mega projects designed ad-hoc are being retrofitted into the new master plan instead," rued N. S. Mukunda, of Bengaluru Praja Vedike, one of the petitioners who challenged the Draft RMP - 2031 in the High Court over procedural issues.

Even as that case was pending in the Court, BDA withdrew the draft as Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. (BMRCL) introduced Transit Oriented Development (TOD) to densify development along metro corridors in the Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP) in 2020, which was not part of Draft RMP - 2031.

As the BDA was working to include TOD in the new draft of the RMP, the State government has introduced Premium Floor Area Ratio (FAR), which allows builders to load additional FAR of upto 60% above the permitted FAR by buying Premium FAR from the city's civic body anywhere in the city, subject to the width of the road. This defeats TOD and may lead to haphazard densification, experts argue.

Ms. Rajagopal also underlined the need to channel ad-hoc infrastructure projects through a mechanism that helps chart a multi-year budget plan that prioritises investments for those projects that meet shared outcomes for the city, like clean air, cutting down travel times, etc.

An urban planner who has worked in multiple metro cities across the country said that Bengaluru was lagging behind in terms of planning.

"Ahmedabad, for instance, is far ahead of other cities. They have not only gotten the master plan right but have moved ahead to create local area plans and cut travel times. Mumbai has done something similar with Navi Mumbai and now Navi Mumbai Airport Influence Notified Area (NAINA). Mumbai has also expanded its road network, though some projects are contested. Chennai has come up with a plan that even plans for economic development and climate resilience. ," she said.

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New Draft RMP-2040 soon, says BDA Commissioner

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj
BENGALURU

Jayaram says a drone survey of BBMP area is over and that of the BDA area is under way

Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) is working towards publishing the draft of RMP-2040 in the next two to three months, BDA Commissioner N. Jayaram said.

"The Department of Survey, Settlement, and Land Records has already done a drone survey of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike area of the city. We are presently carrying out a drone survey of the BDA area, excluding the BBMP area. The survey work is almost half complete," he said, adding that the BDA was gearing up to publish the draft of RMP-2040 over the next two to three months.

However, this has again drawn the ire of civic activists in the city, especially in the backdrop of the State government submitting an affidavit in the Supreme Court that civic polls in the city cannot be held before August 15 this year.

"We challenged Draft RMP-2031 in the High Court as it was not spearheaded by the Bengaluru Metropolitan Planning Committee as mandated by the 74th amendment of the Constitution. Now, BDA is making the same mistake again with Draft RMP-2040. Without an elected council, there is no BMPC, and without that, if the draft of the RMP is published, we will be back to square one," N.S. Mukunda, a petitioner said.

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India, France announce partnership between C-CAMP and PariSanté Campus

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP), a life sciences technology innovation hub by the Department of Biotechnology (Government of India) based in Bengaluru, has inked a pact to launch a bilateral innovation collaboration in the healthcare domain called the Indo French Life Sciences Sister Innovation Hub with PariSanté Campus, a digital health innovation cluster in France.

One Health and Digital Health Technologies have been identified as the two focus areas. The intent is to enable targeted innovative solutions from one geography for challenges impacting another. The aim is to foster links between both hubs to enhance science-based entrepreneurship, research, academia, and businesses by leveraging each other's ecosystems.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron announced the partnership in a joint communiqué. FILE PHOTO

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron formally announced the partnership, following bilateral talks at the Paris AI Summit, in a joint communiqué.

Welcoming the joint statement, C-CAMP Director-CEO Dr. Taslimarif Saiyed said, "We are delighted to have our Letter of Intent (LOI) with PariSanté Campus to be formalised by the highest leadership of the two countries. This clearly indicates the urgency of intent between the two countries to improve the quality and delivery of healthcare for the larger society. The partnership's first goal would be to galvanise global networks of excellence and leverage mutual ecosystems to support researchers and innovators developing cutting-edge solutions from one geography to the other. ."

The LOI was signed on Feb. 10 by Dr. Taslimarif Saiyed and Pr. Antoine Tesnière, Director, PariSanté Campus.

Vimala Rangachar, co-founder of MES, passes away

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Vimala Rangachar, 97, a patron of crafts, textiles, theatre personality, builder of several institutions and an educationist associated with the reputed Mysore Education Society (MES) in Bengaluru, passed away in the city on Tuesday evening. She was suffering from age-related illnesses.

Face of Malleswaram

Ms. Rangachar was the granddaughter of Venkataranga Iyengar, one of the founders of Malleswaram in the late 19th century. She was one of the founders of Mysore Education Society (MES) in 1956 and was involved in running many education institutions of the MES till her last day. Having chaired MES for many years, she was serving as a member of its management committee at the time of her demine.

Vimala Rangachar

She is one of the founders of the Malleswaram Enterprising Women's Society (MEWS), and a patron of Seva Sadan, which she took over from Lokasundari, Nobel laureate scientist Sir C. V. Raman's wife who started it in 1936. She lived in an old-style beautiful house at Malleswaram till her last breath.

Vimala Rangachar, born in 1929, was married to Dr. Rangachar, a doctor and army veteran, when she was just 16 years old. She was active in promoting performing arts, traditional crafts, mainly textiles, something which she inherited from her mother Ammanni Ammal. She even received the Kamala Sanman, given in Kamaladevi's memory, in 2004. She was presented the Rajyotsava award in 2003.

She was a passionate theatre person. She was heading a theatre troupe called Kalajyothi. Disappointed with men playing women's roles on stage, she took to acting, even roping in her husband to act. Their productions of many plays by T. P. Kailasam and Pravatavani were hits.

She was among those responsible for setting up the Jawahar Bal Bhavan at Cubbon Park in the early 1970s, where she created space for theatre as well.

Timings
BENGALURU

THURSDAY, FEB. 27			
RISE	06:36	SET	18:28
RISE	06:00	SET	17:57
FRIDAY, FEB. 28			
RISE	06:36	SET	18:28
RISE	06:45	SET	18:54
SATURDAY, MAR. 01			
RISE	06:35	SET	18:28
RISE	07:28	SET	19:52

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	33	22
Mysuru	33	19
Bengaluru	32	19

Bengaluru Today
32°C Morning will be slight cool with mist and haze. Day will be little warm. Night also will be slight cool. Dry weather to prevail.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
33°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be cool with mist and haze. Day will be warm. Night also will be cool and hazy.

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THE HINDU
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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Money spent by the government on court cases in a decade

400 In ₹ crore. The amount incurred on litigations has gone up since 2014-15, barring two fiscals when the COVID pandemic was at its peak, according to data shared by the government with Lok Sabha in response to a question in the ongoing session. PTI

Bodies of hostages to be swapped for prisoners by Hamas

4 Hamas said it would exchange the bodies of Israeli hostages for more than 600 Palestinian prisoners on Thursday, capping the first phase of a Gaza ceasefire deal. The U.S. said talks were on track for a second phase of the ceasefire deal that has largely held but whose complexity has highlighted its fragility. AFP

Number of civil service jobs to be slashed in Hong Kong by 2027

10,000 Hong Kong's finance chief unveiled a "belt-tightening" budget on Wednesday that aimed to end the city's string of record-high deficits by 2028 while seeking growth in areas such as artificial intelligence. AFP

The U.S. government's spending in the first month under Trump

710 In $ billion. The U.S. government spent more during President Donald Trump's first month in office than it did during the same period a year ago, in a sign his cost-slashing efforts have yet to reduce the nation's heavy fiscal obligations, federal data shows. REUTERS

Proposed boost in California's film and TV tax credits

750 In $ million from $330 million a year. Data shows film production in LA in 2024 fell to the second-lowest level on record, ahead of only 2020. A survey found California was the sixth most preferred place to film. REUTERS

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Why are PwDs worried about DPDP rules?

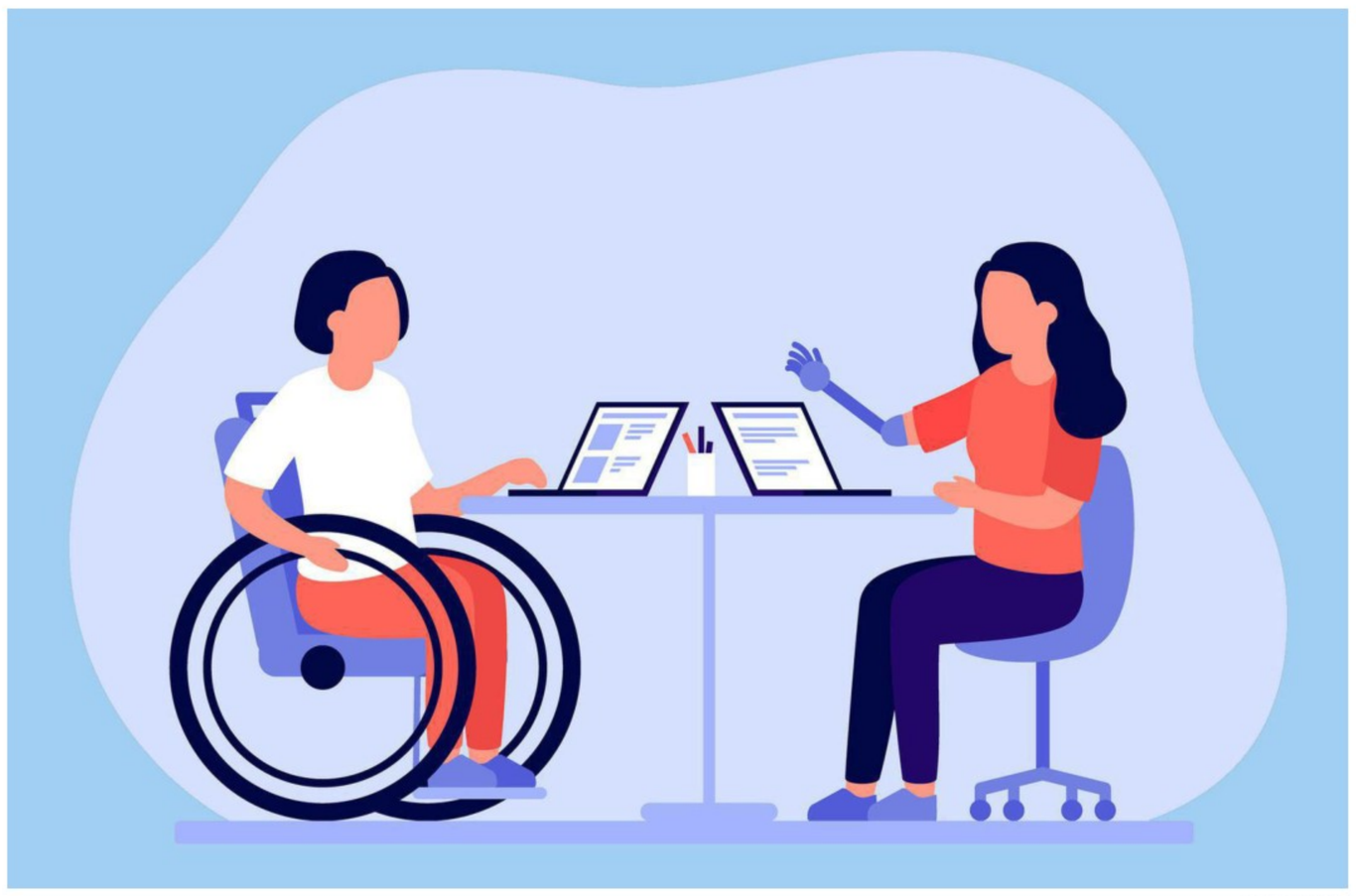
Why are persons with disabilities concerned about a certain provision in the draft Rules of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023? Who are data fiduciaries and data principals? How are legal guardians defined under the draft rules?

EXPLAINER

Abhinay Lakshman

The story so far:
With the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) looking to wrap up public consultations on the draft Rules for the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 by March 5, disability rights activists are trying to get a key provision of the Act amended or dropped, pointing out that it infantilises Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), negates their decision-making capabilities, and comes from a misunderstood notion of how guardianship works for PwDs.

What does this provision state?
Section 9(1), in clubbing children with PwDs, has mandated that even in cases of adult PwDs who have legal guardians, consent for use of any personal data must be obtained from the guardian concerned. While government officials have said that the draft Rules have tried to address the issue by limiting the number of disabilities the provision would apply to, activists and experts maintain that there remain significant challenges in its implementation.



GETTY IMAGES

What do the draft Rules say?
The Union government has said that it brought the DPDP Act, 2023 to govern the processing of digital personal data in a way that "recognises both the right of individuals to protect their personal data and the need to process such personal data for lawful purposes and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto". Section 9(1) of the Act says, "The Data Fiduciary shall, before processing any personal data of a child or a person with disability who has a lawful guardian obtain verifiable consent of the parent of such child or the lawful guardian, as the case may be, in such manner as may be prescribed."

The Act's language defines data fiduciaries as those parties processing the personal data and data principals as the users whose data is being collected. But in Section 2(j)(ii), for PwDs, the Act has included "lawful guardian" within the meaning of data principal.

In the draft Rules notified by the MeitY on January 3 this year, the government has proceeded to set out the rules that will govern the Act. In these Rules, Rule 10 deals with the governing of Section 9(1) of the Act. Rule 10(2) says, "A Data Fiduciary, while obtaining verifiable consent from an individual identifying herself as the lawful guardian of a person with disability, shall observe due diligence to verify that such guardian is appointed by a court of law, a designated authority or a local level committee, under the law applicable to guardianship." In the next sub-section, the Rules provide for considering guardianship under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD Act) and the National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999 (NT Act).

It also goes on to define PwDs, for whom the consent clause of Section 9(1) would apply to, as: "(i) an individual who has long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders her full and effective participation in society equally with others and who, despite being provided adequate and appropriate support, is unable to take legally binding decisions; And (ii) an individual who is suffering from any of the conditions relating to autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation or a combination of any two or more of such conditions and includes an individual suffering from severe multiple disability."

But while the Rule on how to take the consent of the parents of children contains detailed explanations in the form of illustrations that highlight different scenarios and how the consent procedure would work in each, there is no similar illustrations presented for the sub-section that deals with taking consent of the guardian of a person with disability.

This has led disability rights activists and experts alike to question how the consent clause would apply to PwDs, details of procedures for different disabilities and degrees of severity, and whether it would apply uniformly to guardians appointed under different laws.

How do guardianships for PwDs work?
The legal guardianship for PwDs, while not mandatory, is governed by two laws in India – the RPWD Act, 2016 and the NT Act, 1999 – both of which mandate different roles for the guardians appointed under it for adult PwDs.

The NT Act's guardianship clauses apply to people who are "diagnosed with conditions related to autism, cerebral palsy, intellectual disability (previously categorised as mental retardation), or any combined occurrence of two or more of these conditions". It provides for full guardianship of the PwD. In contrast, the RPWD Act's guardianship clauses apply to people "experiencing long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which, when interacting with various barriers, hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others". This provides for a "limited guardianship", which allows for support in making specific legal decisions when the individual's capacity is deemed insufficient.

While the NT Act goes against the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) by making "decision-making capacity" a metric for guardianship without adequately defining it, the RPWD Act, drafted to keep up with the UNCRPD, frames guardianship as support to PwDs in exercising their own decision-making rights.

Where does the conflict arise?
A small survey among 91 PwDs by policy thinktank PACTA and Saksham Disability has shown that about 27.4% of them had legal guardians. Amongst those respondents who knew which law their guardianship was governed by, most said theirs were under the RPWD Act's provision for "limited guardianship". But despite this, the practicalities of guardianship are different, a report by Saksham and PACTA noted, adding that most of the PwDs with guardians maintained that their legal guardian ends up managing all their affairs. This report, released last month, noted that while the Act and the draft Rules are sound "in theory" if the guardianship is under the RPWD Act, the realities of how this guardianship works would mean that "a guardian is likely to deprive the autonomy and personhood of the individual".

On the other hand, in cases of guardians appointed under the NT Act, this would be in "direct conflict" with the autonomy of persons with disabilities under the UNCRPD, the report argued.

The report noted that a plain reading of Section 9(1) of the DPDP Act "appears to presume" that just because a PwD might have a legal guardian, this in itself would be indicative of their "inability to take decisions in the digital sphere".

In addition, it said the law does not consider intersectionality of gender and disability. It cites a situation where a PwD woman may not be able to buy sanitary napkins from an online platform because it may now require their guardian's consent for them to be able to access the platform itself.

Nipun Malhotra, of the Nipman Foundation, who is leading efforts to lobby the government on these provisions, has said that Section 9(1) of the DPDP Act, 2023 itself has caused enough chaos on how it would apply, to whom, and under what circumstances. As for the government's attempts to address the issue with the law by limiting the definition of PwDs in the draft Rules, Mr. Malhotra told *The Hindu*, "Instead of simplifying how it would apply, the definitions have further complicated the issue." Citing one example of the definition, he explained that "physical impairment" has been included. "But there is no provision for people with just physical disability to have legal guardians. This will only confuse people more."

What are the concerns being raised?
Given the way the consent clause has been structured for PwDs in the DPDP Act, 2023 and the draft Rules, some of the principal concerns that have emerged include those of what legal obligations would the guardian of a PwD face; how the consent clause can be implemented in cases where guardianship law is in dissonance with the UNCRPD; and whether the legal guardian can opt out of consenting on behalf of the user with respect to specific platforms.

Another issue highlighted by Saksham in their report has been that of concerns among PwDs about what the fate of their personal data will be. For instance, the rights body has posited that to comply with Section 9(1) of the Act, any data fiduciary would have to ask at least two questions: (i) Whether the user has a disability? (ii) Whether the user had a legal guardian. In cases where the answer to the first question is yes but the second is not, the platform will still have data on the person's disability with no purpose to process it.

Further, Saksham has questioned that if the definition of data principal includes the legal guardian of a PwD, would that then mean that they must take on the full legal responsibility and face penal consequences under the Act? It has been argued that if this is the case, the legal guardian may, at times, be acting in their own interest, instead of the PwD they are caring for. Moreover, experts working in the disability sector have pointed out that beyond all of this, the primary barrier to PwDs' digital rights remains that of inaccessible platforms and applications. According to a 2023 accessibility evaluation conducted by the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy of the 10 most used apps, platforms like Paytm, Swiggy, Zomato, and Flipkart had low accessibility scores.

THE GIST

- Section 9(1), in clubbing children with PwDs, has mandated that even in cases of adult PwDs who have legal guardians, consent for use of any personal data must be obtained from the guardian concerned.
- The legal guardianship for PwDs, while not mandatory, is governed by two laws in India — the RPWD Act, 2016 and the NT Act, 1999 — both of which mandate different roles for the guardians appointed under it for adult PwDs.
- A small survey among 91 PwDs by policy thinktank PACTA and Saksham Disability has shown that about 27.4% of them had legal guardians. Amongst those respondents who knew which law their guardianship was governed by, most said theirs were under the RPWD Act's provision for "limited guardianship".

‘Withholding full pension, gratuity when graft charge is not proved is worse than dismissal from service’

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka has termed as “worse than dismissal” the action of the authorities in withholding 100% pension and gratuity amount of a retired employee of Central Excise, Customs and Service Tax without establishing corruption charges against him for 13 years.

“The petitioner is now 73 years old. He has not seen the light of his terminal benefits, despite his retirement 13 years ago. He is left bleeding by the impugned penalty, which is worse than dismissal from service,” the court observed while setting aside the order of withholding pension and gratuity.

Justice M. Nagaprasanna passed the order while allowing a petition filed by Hanumanth N. Karkun of Saptapur in Dharwad.

The charge

A case was registered against the petitioner in 2011 on the charge of demanding ₹2,000 and finally accepting ₹1,500 as bribe from a complainant for issuing a service tax registration certificate. The alleged ₹1,500 was found on his table and not recovered from his personal possession. He retired from service in 2012. Later, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which took over the probe from the Karnataka Lokayukta police, filed a chargesheet against him in 2013.

On the other hand, the inquiry officer, in the departmental inquiry, exonerated the petitioner from the charges but the disciplinary authority rejected the report and ordered a fresh inquiry. Again the inquiry officer submitted a report indicating that there was no evidence to establish that the petitioner had failed to maintain absolute integrity.

However, the disciplinary authority rejected the second inquiry report and referred the matter to the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

Meanwhile, a trial court in 2015 acquitted the petitioner from the charges of corruption by holding that the prosecution had miserably failed to prove the guilt of the petitioner beyond all reasonable doubt.

Order of UPSC

Subsequently, the UPSC in its 2023 order recommended the disciplinary authority to withhold 100% pension and the entire gratuity amount of the petitioner on a permanent basis. The petitioner’s appeal against this decision was pending adjudication before the appellate authority.

The court said there is no provision in the law to withhold 100% pension while also pointing out that the gratuity of the petitioner cannot be withheld as he was not terminated from service as the law allows withholding of gratuity, completely or partly, only when service of a delinquent employee was terminated for an offence of moral turpitude.

Bus services between Karnataka and Maharashtra resume slowly

NWKRTC estimates it suffered a loss of around ₹40 lakh in the four days the services were suspended

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

The North Western Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (NWKRTC) began running buses on some routes to Maharashtra on Wednesday. Operations on around 50 routes began from depots in Belagavi and Chikkodi. All the services may resume by Thursday, officers said.

The services had been suspended following attacks on State transport buses in Maharashtra and Karnataka. Shiv Sena (UBT) activists had defaced buses in Kolhapur and Solapur while the MSRTC buses were stopped or defaced at Ilkal and Ramdurg last week.

This followed an attack on an NWKRTC conductor allegedly over a language row. Buses from both the States were plying only up to the border. Makeshift bus stations were set up at the border where the people would cross on foot and take the bus to their destination. This arrangement worked for a few days.

After a break: An NWKRTC bus ready to leave for Kolhapur in Maharashtra, at Belagavi bus stand on Wednesday. P.K. BADIGER

The resumption of service follows a coordination meeting between senior officers of border districts on Tuesday. Belagavi Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Roshan and Superintendent of Police Bheemashankar S. Guled held talks with their respective counterparts in Kolhapur, Solapur, and Sangli districts in Maharashtra.

They addressed issues of safety of buses and staff and the timing of buses. It was agreed that the resumption of services would be taken up at the earliest. Officers had exchanged information about cases registered against miscreants who defaced buses in both States. They also agreed on a set of guidelines for smooth bus operations between the two States.

Earlier on Monday, NWKRTC managing director Priyanga M. met Chetan Singh Rathore, IGP (Northern Range), and asked the police to act against the offenders in 63 cases of assault on the NWKRTC staff. She pointed out that in most cases, minor scuffles had escalated to violent conflicts and taken different dimensions. In some cases, the offenders were let off after local police filed ‘B’ reports. All the cases should be properly investigated, she said in a letter.

Conductor recovers

Meanwhile, the NWKRTC conductor, Mahadev Hukkeri, has recovered and has been discharged. He has been advised to rest at home, officers said. The NWKRTC estimates it suffered a loss of around ₹40 lakh in the four days the bus services were suspended.

Four-day book fair on Vidhana Soudha premises from today

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Taking stock: Legislative Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti and Assembly Speaker U.T. Khader reviewing arrangements for the book fair at the Vidhana Soudha on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

For the first time, the environs of the Vidhana Soudha, the administrative nerve centre of the State, will host a book exhibition and cultural festival, from Thursday evening.

The Karnataka State Legislature Book Fair - 2025, spearheaded by Assembly Speaker U.T. Khader, will not only host over 150 bookstalls, mostly selling Kannada books with rebates, but will also host a series of panels and poetry sessions through the weekend, throwing open the Vidhana Soudha for the public.

The public will have free entry into the Vidhana Soudha, which is usually a fortress with tight security not allowing the public without a pass for a specific purpose inside.

The book fair will be inaugurated at 4 p.m. on Thursday by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and will go on till March 2. The book fair will be open to the public from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

‘A first step’

“The idea is to remove the gap between the Vidhana Soudha and the public. Neither the public nor the writers, scholars, and thinkers should be away from the Vidhana Soudha. They need to be brought closer for a good collaboration, to ensure the State’s welfare. Opening up the gates of the Vidhana Soudha is a symbolic first step,” Mr. Khader said.

The book fair will be open to the public from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. till March 2

Mr. Khader further said he would continue to hold the book fair annually till he continues as the Speaker, and hoped his successors also continue the good practice. “There are also suggestions that a similar book fair should be held at the Suvarna Soudha ahead of the winter session. We will look into that as well, depending on the response to this fair in Bengaluru,” he said.

Over 150 stalls have been given to publishers, mostly of Kannada books, at no cost, and instead have been asked to give big discounts.

The four-day book fair will also become a platform for a host of panel discussions on literature, four poetry meets, and publishing industry in Kannada which will see leading writers of Kannada participate. Two Jnanpith awardees – Kannada writer Chandrashekar Kambar and Konkani writer Damodar Mauzo – will also participate. Several new books will be released at the book fair, which will conclude with a musical programme by noted film music composers Arjun Janya and Sadhu Kokila, who is also the chairman of Karnataka Chalanachitra Academy.

Differences in BJP should not reflect on unity of Oppn. benches in House: HDK

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Amid the turmoil in the State BJP unit over the leadership issue, the party’s alliance partner, Janata Dal (Secular), is learnt to have flagged the issue during the coordination meeting of the leaders of the two parties.

While the meeting, held on Tuesday, was to strategise the Opposition’s charge against the Congress government headed by Siddaramaiah during the Budget session of the legislature starting on March 3, JD(S) leaders, especially Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries H.D. Kumaraswamy, suggested that the differences in the BJP ranks should not reflect on the unity of the Opposition Benches inside both Houses of the legislature.

‘Go with documents’

He is learnt to have told BJP leaders to find synergy among themselves inside the House that will enable the saffron party to perform better. He is also learnt to have asked BJP leaders to attack the government based on documents, instead of making allegations which could become difficult to sustain without any proof.

“His suggestion was that a party that is in disorder will not be able to attack the ruling Congress, though it is also divided. Documents of misdeeds by the government should be dug up by everyone and the onus is not alone on the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R. Ashok,” sources said. Mr. Kumaraswamy is learnt to have told BJP leaders that all the parties, including the JD(S), was facing some kind of dissidence.

Planning strategy: A meeting of prominent leaders of the BJP and JD(S) was held in Bengaluru to discuss the issues to be taken up in the legislature during the upcoming session.

The meeting, convened by Mr. Ashok, was attended, among others, by Mr. Kumaraswamy, former Chief Ministers Basavaraj Bommai and D.V. Sadananda Gowda, and BJP State president B.Y. Vijayendra.

After the meeting, Mr. Ashok told media persons the BJP-JD(S) would take up issues including an increase in the incidents of communal clashes and the alleged failure of the government to act sternly against perpetrators, continued deaths of poor people despite the promulgation of an Ordinance to prevent harassment by microfinance firms, irregularities in the KPSC examination, and farmer suicides. He sought to downplay the issue of internal tussle in the BJP by maintaining that everything would become alright after the election of the party State president.

‘BJP will take up the issue of nursing staff’

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The BJP on Wednesday assured the protesting nurses working on contract basis of raising their issue in the legislature session.

Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, who visited the nurses who are protesting seeking regularisation of their services and equal pay for equal work, assured them that the BJP would stand with them in their struggle. He accused the government of being apathetic to them. Particularly criticising Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, he alleged that the Minister’s style of functioning was not healthy.

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಪ್ರಸರಣ ನಿಗಮ ನಿಯಮಿತ

(ಸಿ.ಐ.ಎನ್.: ಯು40109ಕೆಎ1999ಎಸ್‌ಜಿಸಿ025521)

ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ಕವಿಪ್ರನಿನಿ/ಬಿ16/44953/2023–24 (Document Verification) ದಿನಾಂಕ: 25.02.2025

ಅಧಿಸೂಚನೆ

ವಿಷಯ : ಕವಿಪ್ರನಿನಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಕಿರಿಯ ಸ್ಟೇಷನ್ ಪರಿಚಾರಕ ಮತ್ತು ಕಿರಿಯ ಪವರ್‌ಮ್ಯಾನ್ ಹುದ್ದೆಗಳ ನೇಮಕಾತಿಗೆ ಸಂಬಂಧಿಸಿದಂತೆ, ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳ ಪರಿಶೀಲನೆಗಾಗಿ ಅರ್ಹ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳ ಪಟ್ಟಿಗಳನ್ನು ಪ್ರಕಟಿಸುವ ಹಾಗೂ ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳನ್ನು ಆನ್‌ಲೈನ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವ ಬಗ್ಗೆ.

ಉಲ್ಲೇಖ: 1. ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ಕವಿಪ್ರನಿನಿ/ಬಿ16/44953/2023–24 (KK) & (NKK) ದಿನಾಂಕ: 14.10.2024.

2. ತಿದ್ದುಪಡಿ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ಕವಿಪ್ರನಿನಿ/ಬಿ16/44953/2023–24 (KK) ದಿನಾಂಕ: 20.12.2024.

ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ ಕವಿಪ್ರನಿನಿ/ಬಿ16/44953/2023–24 (KK) & (NKK) ದಿನಾಂಕ 14.10.2024 ಹಾಗೂ ದಿನಾಂಕ 20.12.2024 ರ ತಿದ್ದುಪಡಿಗೆ ಅನುಗುಣವಾಗಿ, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಪ್ರಸರಣ ನಿಗಮ ನಿಯಮಿತದಲ್ಲಿ ಕಿರಿಯ ಸ್ಟೇಷನ್ ಪರಿಚಾರಕ ಮತ್ತು ಕಿರಿಯ ಪವರ್‌ಮ್ಯಾನ್ ಹುದ್ದೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಸೂಚಿತ ರಿಕ್ತ ಸ್ಥಾನಗಳ 1:5 ರ ಅನುಪಾತದಲ್ಲಿ ಹುದ್ದೆವಾರು ಅರ್ಹ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳ ಪಟ್ಟಿಗಳನ್ನು, ಕಟ್-ಆಫ್ ಅಂಕಗಳೊಂದಿಗೆ ಕವಿಪ್ರನಿನಿ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್ https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in/ ರಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರಕಟಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಸದರಿ ಪಟ್ಟಿಗಳು ಆಯ್ಕೆ ಪಟ್ಟಿಯಾಗಿರುವುದಿಲ್ಲ ಹಾಗೂ ಆನ್-ಲೈನ್ ಅರ್ಜಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳು ತಿಳಿಸಿರುವ ಮಾಹಿತಿಯ ಅನುಗುಣವಾಗಿ ಪ್ರಕಟಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಸರ್ಕಾರದ Digilocker ತಂತ್ರಾಂಶವನ್ನು ಬಳಸಿಕೊಂಡು ಆನ್‌ಲೈನ್ ಮೂಲಕ ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳ ಪರಿಶೀಲನೆಯನ್ನು ನಡೆಸಲು ಉದ್ದೇಶಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಈ ಸಂಬಂಧವಾಗಿ 1:5 ರ ಅನುಪಾತದ ಪಟ್ಟಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸೇರಿರುವ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳು, ಈ ಕೆಳಗೆ ತಿಳಿಸಿರುವಂತೆ ಸೂಕ್ತ ಪೂರ್ವಭಾವಿ ಸಿದ್ಧತೆಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಿಕೊಂಡು, ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳನ್ನು ನಿಗಮದ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಸೂಕ್ತ ರೀತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಅಪ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡುವಂತೆ ತಿಳಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

1. ದಾಖಲಾತಿ ಪರಿಶೀಲನೆ ಪಟ್ಟಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸೇರಿರುವಂತಹ ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಮೊದಲಿಗೆ Digilocker ತಂತ್ರಾಂಶದಲ್ಲಿ Register ಮಾಡಿಕೊಂಡು, ತಮ್ಮ ಆಧಾರ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆಯೊಂದಿಗೆ Login ಆಗಿ, 10ನೇ ತರಗತಿ, ಜಾತಿ ಪ್ರಮಾಣ ಪತ್ರ, ಹೆಚ್.ಕೆ. ಪ್ರಮಾಣ ಪತ್ರ, UDID Card ಪ್ರಮಾಣ ಪತ್ರಗಳನ್ನು Issued documentsನಲ್ಲಿ ಪಡೆಯತಕ್ಕದ್ದು (Digilocker ತಂತ್ರಾಂಶದಲ್ಲಿ Register ಮಾಡಿಕೊಂಡು ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳನ್ನು Issued Documents ನಲ್ಲಿ ಪಡೆಯುವ ವಿಧಾನವನ್ನು ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ತಿಳಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ).
2. 1:5 ರ ಅನುಪಾತದ ಪಟ್ಟಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸೇರಿರುವ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳು, ಆನ್-ಲೈನ್ ಅರ್ಜಿ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವ ಸಂದರ್ಭದಲ್ಲಿ ಕಾರಣಾಂತರಗಳಿಂದ ಭಾವಚಿತ್ರ / ಸಹಿ ತಪ್ಪಾಗಿ ನಮೂದಾದಲ್ಲಿ, Document upload module ನಲ್ಲಿ login ಮಾಡಿದ ಕೂಡಲೇ “ನೀವು ಆನ್‌ಲೈನ್ ಅರ್ಜಿ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವ ಸಂದರ್ಭದಲ್ಲಿ ತಮ್ಮ ಭಾವಚಿತ್ರ ಮತ್ತು ಸಹಿ ಅಪ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡುವಲ್ಲಿ ಯಾವುದೇ ವ್ಯತ್ಯಾಸ ಉಂಟಾಗಿದೆಯೇ?” ಎಂಬುವುದಕ್ಕೆ “ಹೌದು” ಎಂಬ ಗುಂಡಿಯನ್ನು ಒತ್ತಿ, ತಮ್ಮ ಸರಿಯಾದ ಭಾವಚಿತ್ರ ಮತ್ತು ಸಹಿಯನ್ನು ಅಪ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡತಕ್ಕದ್ದು.
3. 1:5 ರ ಅನುಪಾತದ ಪಟ್ಟಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸೇರಿರುವ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳು, ಆನ್‌ಲೈನ್ ಅರ್ಜಿಯನ್ನು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವ ಸಂದರ್ಭದಲ್ಲಿ e-sign ಪ್ರಕ್ರಿಯೆ ಪೂರ್ಣಗೊಳಿಸದೇ ಇದ್ದಲ್ಲಿ, Document upload module ನಲ್ಲಿ ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳನ್ನು ಅಪ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡುವ ಮುನ್ನ ತಮ್ಮ ಆಧಾರ್ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆಯೊಂದಿಗೆ e-sign ಪ್ರಕ್ರಿಯೆಯನ್ನು ಪೂರ್ಣಗೊಳಿಸತಕ್ಕದ್ದು.
4. Digilocker ನ Issued documents ನಲ್ಲಿ ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳನ್ನು fetch ಮಾಡಿಕೊಂಡ ನಂತರ, ಕವಿಪ್ರನಿನಿ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್ ಭೇಟಿ ನೀಡಿ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳು ದಾಖಲಾತಿ ಅಪ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡುವ ಸಲುವಾಗಿ ತಿಳಿಸಿರುವ ಲಿಂಕ್ ಅನ್ನು ಒತ್ತಿ, ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ತಿಳಿಸಿರುವ ಮಾರ್ಗಸೂಚಿಯನ್ನು ಪಾಲಿಸುವುದರೊಂದಿಗೆ, ಅರ್ಜಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಕೋರಿರುವ ಮೀಸಲಾತಿಗಳನುಗುಣವಾಗಿ, ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳನ್ನು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವುದು (Document upload ಮಾಡುವ ವಿಧಾನವನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ನಮೂನೆಗಳನ್ನು ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ತಿಳಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ).
5. Digilocker ತಂತ್ರಾಂಶದಲ್ಲಿ ಲಭ್ಯವಿಲ್ಲದೇ ಇರುವಂತಹ ದಾಖಲೆಗಳನ್ನು ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳು 500 KB ಮೀರದಂತಹ PDF Document ಗಳಾಗಿ ಸ್ಕ್ಯಾನ್ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಂಡು ತಂತ್ರಾಂಶದ Document Upload ವಿಭಾಗದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಬಂಧಪಟ್ಟ ಮೀಸಲಾತಿ ಮುಂದೆ ಅಪ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡುವುದು.
6. ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಎಲ್ಲಾ ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳನ್ನು ಅಪ್-ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡಿದ ನಂತರ, ತಮ್ಮ ಆಧಾರ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆಯೊಂದಿಗೆ e-sign ಮಾಡುವುದು. e-sign ಮಾಡುವ ಮುನ್ನ, ತಾವು ಎಲ್ಲಾ ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳನ್ನು ನಿಗದಿತ ನಮೂನೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಅಪ್-ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡಿರುವ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಖಾತ್ರಿ ಪಡಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳತಕ್ಕದ್ದು ಹಾಗೂ ಅದರ ಒಂದು ಮುದ್ರಿತ ಪ್ರತಿಯನ್ನು / soft-copy ಪಡೆದಿಟ್ಟುಕೊಳ್ಳತಕ್ಕದ್ದು.

ಮುಂದುವರೆದು, ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳ ಪರಿಶೀಲನೆಗಾಗಿ, ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಅವಶ್ಯಕ ಮಾಹಿತಿಯನ್ನು ಕವಿಪ್ರನಿನಿ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್ **https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in/** ರಲ್ಲಿ ಪಡೆಯತಕ್ಕದ್ದು. **ದಾಖಲಾತಿ ಅಪ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡಲು ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಕವಿಪ್ರನಿನಿ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್ https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in/ ರಲ್ಲಿ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 27.02.2025 ರಿಂದ 10.03.2025 ರವರೆಗೆ ಅವಕಾಶವನ್ನು ಕಲ್ಪಿಸಲಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ.**

ದಿನಾಂಕ: 10.03.2025 ರ ನಂತರ ದಾಖಲಾತಿ ಅಪ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡಲು ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಯಾವುದೇ ರೀತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಅವಕಾಶವನ್ನು ನೀಡಲಾಗುವುದಿಲ್ಲ. ನಿಗದಿತ ಕಾಲಾವಧಿಯೊಳಗೆ ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳನ್ನು ಅಪ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡದ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳನ್ನು ಗೈರು ಹಾಜರೆಂದು ಪರಿಗಣಿಸಿ, ಇವರಿಗೆ ನೇಮಕಾತಿಗೆ ಯಾವುದೇ ಆಸಕ್ತಿಯಿಲ್ಲವೆಂದು ಭಾವಿಸಿ, ನೇಮಕಾತಿ ಪ್ರಕ್ರಿಯೆಯಿಂದ ಅನರ್ಹಗೊಳಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು.

ಪೂರ್ಣಪ್ರಮಾಣದ ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳನ್ನು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾತ್ರ ಸಹನಾ ಶಕ್ತಿ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗೆ ಪರಿಗಣಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು. ಸಹನಾ ಶಕ್ತಿ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗೆ ಸಂಬಂಧಿಸಿದಂತೆ, ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕ ಅಧಿಸೂಚನೆ ಮತ್ತು ಮಾರ್ಗಸೂಚಿಗಳನ್ನು ನಂತರದ ದಿನಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ತಿಳಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು.

ಸಹಿ/– ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರು (ಆಡಳಿತ ಮತ್ತು ಮಾ.ಸಂ.)
ನಿಗಮ ಕಾರ್ಯಾಲಯ, ಕ.ವಿ.ಪ್ರ.ನಿ.ನಿ, ಕಾವೇರಿ ಭವನ,
ಕೆ. ಜಿ. ರಸ್ತೆ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು–560009.

DKS lauds Kumbh Mela arrangements

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC chief D.K. Shivakumar on Wednesday praised the arrangements at the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj and opposed “politicisation” of the event.

Taking a jibe at his critics, he said he was “born as a Hindu and will die as the Hindu”. But he has respect towards all religions, Mr. Shivakumar added.

“The Congress believes in taking everyone with it. Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Indira Gandhi have followed this philosophy of the party. I have seen Sonia Gandhi celebrating Ugadi festival; she is more Indian than many of us,” he said.

Talking about his experiences at the Kumbh Mela, Mr. Shivakumar said the Uttar Pradesh government had made good arrangements, and lauded the leadership of Yogi Adityanath.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

SHANKAR NARAYAN JAYARAMAN
DOB:12.02.1931 DOD: 07.02.2025
An Endearing Personality Enlightening Others. Worked in The Hindu in Mumbai & London UK till 1970
Survived by
Wife, children, grandchildren & Brother & Sisters.
Mob:+44 7805 214102

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

INVITATION FOR TENDER
(Through KPP Portal Only)

BWSSB invites Tenders from registered Agencies for the following Works.

Office of the Chief Engineer (Kaveri-O&M), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560009.

Sl. No.	Division	IFT Number	Sl. No.	Amount Put to Tender / EMD Amount	Last Date & Time for Submission of Tender	Date & Time for Opening of Tender
1	(Kaveri - O & M)-2	BWSSB/EE(K-O&M)-2/PB/ 3089/2024-25 Dated: 21-02-2025 (CALL-2)	1	Rs. 75,07,340/- / Rs. 1,51,000/-	06-03-2025 Upto 4.00 PM	07-03-2025 after 5.00 PM

Sd/- Executive Engineer (Kaveri-O&M)-2

Office of the Chief Engineer (South), 7th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560009.

2	(South-West-1)	BWSSB/EESW-1/TO/PB/ 4965/2024-25 Dated: 24-02-2025	1	Rs. 18,90,154/- / Rs. 47,300/-	07-03-2025 Upto 4.00 PM	10-03-2025 After 3.00 PM
			2	Rs. 99,56,308/- / Rs. 1,99,200/-		

Sd/- Executive Engineer (South-West-1)

The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-Procurement Portal process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**. For further details contact the above signed office during working hours. DIPR/CP/Adverto/5313/2024-25

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Turning tides: C Krishnakumar, the BJP candidate for the Palakkad Assembly constituency, during a road show at Palakkad in 2024. K. K. MUSTAFAH

Why the south of India is no longer impervious to the saffron march

A case study of Kerala shows how the last frontier of Hindutva is being breached in the south. A new book edited by Nissim Mannathukkaren examines the rise of Hindutva in relation to the State's history, caste, culture, post-truth, ideology, gender, politics and the Indian national space

Ziya Us Salam

Trajectories of north and south Indian history have moved at different levels. Unlike north India, where history is often a recollection of invasions and wars, massacres and destruction, the south's has been more about accommodation, assimilation and affirmation. As recounted by historian Romila Thapar in her landmark work, *History of Early India*, "The Arabs settled permanently in the coastal regions of the west and the south from about the eighth and ninth centuries. They were welcomed, given land for trading stations and left free to practise their religion, as had been the convention with Christians earlier in south India....Among the more interesting aspects of Arab settlements along the west coast is that each group adopted some of the customary law, and even some forms of worship, from the local community with whom they had the closest contact." It is in stark contrast to what happened in north India with the invasion of Sindh by Mohammed bin Qasim in 712 CE, and later the raids of Mahmud of Ghazni.

The dichotomy continues to this day. For instance, while north India has been awash with resurgent Hindutva since the time of the Ayodhya dispute, and the consequent othering of fellow citizens of other faiths, large tracts of south India have consistently resisted the march of Hindutva forces. In the general elections last summer, the Bharatiya Janata Party failed to gain even one seat in Tamil Nadu, and won one seat in Kerala.

'A real force'

But the limited electoral success does not necessarily mean that the south is impervious to the saffron march. Arguing that Hindutva is a real force which needs to be contended within theoretical and empirical terms, journalist and writer Nissim Mannathukkaren and several other writers including Christophe Jaffrelot, T.T. Sreekumar, Anil M. Varughese, J. Devika and others examine the rise of Hindu nationalism in Kerala in a new book, *Hindu Nationalism in South India* (Routledge). Placing Kerala in the context of south India, several essays examine the rise of Hindutva in relation to the State's history, caste, culture, post-truth, ideology, gender, politics and the Indian national space.

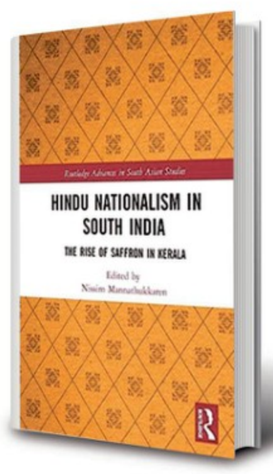
"Hindu nationalism appears 'more confident, proud, brazen and belligerent than ever before'," Mannathukkaren writes in the Introduction, quoting Edward Anderson and Arkotong Longkumer. But the expansion is not just electoral, it is also socio-cultural, he says. That is why despite the lack of comparable electoral success in Kerala and south India, "it is vital to map the tectonic changes that are happening at a discursive level across India," he writes. Mannathukkaren explains how despite the absence of seats on the electoral charts, the BJP's vote share has been on the upswing in Kerala, and to a lesser extent in Tamil Nadu.

"An electoral analysis of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the BJP in Kerala shows that they increased the vote share from 6.31% in 2009 to 10.83% in 2014, and further to 15.20% in 2019. While the increase in votes has not been enough to win any seats, the changes are very important considering that the Hindu population is only around 55% in the State," he notes. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP won one seat in Kerala with actor-turned-politician Suresh Gopi winning from Thrissur, while the Congress-led United Democratic Front bagged 18 of 20 Lok Sabha seats.

In Telangana, the BJP won four parliamentary seats in 2019. In the 2023 Assembly Elections, it increased its vote share from 6.9% (2018) to 13.90%, its total votes from 14.43 lakh to 32.51 lakh and its seats from one to eight. Effectively, every seventh voter had bought the BJP's narrative of Hindu nationalism. The saffron gains in the south are real, and could in the foreseeable future, be tangible too.

Surge in Karnataka

The most significant saffron gains have been in Karnataka where the BJP made an electoral breakthrough as early as 1991. According to Mannathukkaren, "South India as a whole cannot be generalised for there are regional variations among States, such as the significant advancement of Hindutva in Karnataka. But crucially, there are variations even within States (thus, there are frontiers within States); for example, in coastal Karnataka, the BJP has won all three seats since 2000. Unique demographic and sociocultural factors gave rise to a virulent Hindutva much before many other places."


Routledge Advances in South Asian Studies
HINDU NATIONALISM IN SOUTH INDIA
THE RISE OF SAFFRON IN KERALA
Edited by
Nissim Mannathukkaren

But Kerala has drawn a lot of attention as it is perceived as a Left stronghold. Explains Mannathukkaren, "Arguably, no State in India in recent times has drawn the ire of Hindutva groups as much as Kerala. This has been amplified by traditional media as well as social media networks doing the bidding for the Hindutva dispensation. Thus, the Prime Minister compares Kerala with Somalia (in terms of development), prominent television channels refer to the State as 'Pakistan', WhatsApp forwards and Facebook posts talk of Kerala's 'killing fields' (of Hindutva activists) and its 'jihadi terror' factories...."

Deep roots

A socio-cultural change is taking hold, as Jaffrelot points out in his essay: "It happens through a couple of processes: firstly, the denigration of secularism, religious figures wielding state power, new laws targeting conversion, a ban on beef, the Hinduisation of street/city names, the rewriting of textbooks, etc., which give legitimacy to Hindu nationalism, and secondly, the previously-covert-but now-visible forms of discrimination against religious minorities." While the rise of Hindutva politics has touched almost every part of the country, its roots go back all the way to the time of Jawaharlal Nehru. As Jaffrelot notes, "Nehru fought against all forms of communalism (whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh), not against religion per se...He never intended to separate politics and religion....Nehru outlined his views on the subject in 1961, when he said, 'We talk about a secular state in India. It is perhaps not very easy even to find a good word in Hindi for 'secular.' Some people think it means something opposed to religion. That obviously is not correct. What it means is that it is a state which honours all faiths equally and gives them equal opportunities."

Thus, it is critical to remember what Nayantara Sahgal said: "We are not all Hindus but we are all Hindustani," from Kerala to Kashmir.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

While it lasted, the Soviet Union was defined by many actions and ideas that captured the unique practices required to survive its politics. This quiz remembers a few

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

In a bid to overturn what he called the 'era of stagnation' of the Soviet Union beginning from Leonid Brezhnev's term, Mikhail Gorbachev initiated a series of reforms that infused socialism with ideas from liberal economics. What was Gorbachev's 'initiative' called?

QUESTION 2

The Soviet Union maintained camps throughout its territory where both conventionally convicted criminals and political prisoners were interred and condemned to forced labour. The collective name for these camps was the Russian acronym for "Main Directorate of Correctional Labour Camps". What was the acronym?

QUESTION 3

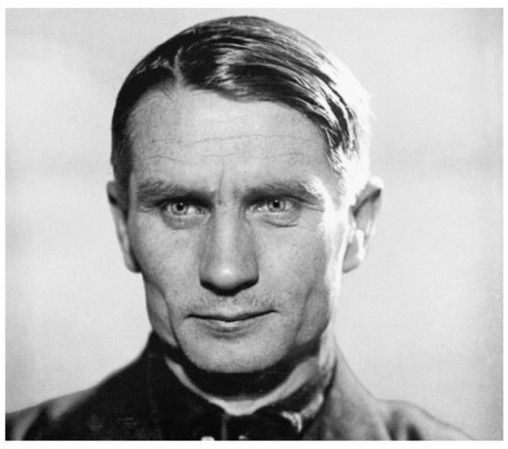
Beyond the official ranks assigned to members of the governmental apparatus of the Soviet Union, one way was to separate them by their perceived competence. Those in the lower ranks were called apparatchik and those higher up, _____, literally "a system of names". Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 4

_____ is a tendency towards openness and transparency, away from restrictions on the flow of information. While Gorbachev popularised the term, it emerged during a Moscow rally of the same name in the 1960s, a notable expression of the Soviet civil rights movement. Fill in the blank.

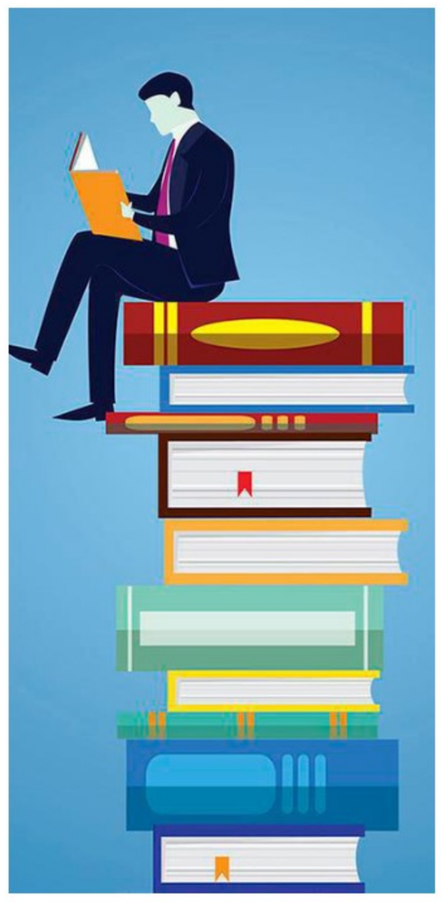
QUESTION 5

Prior to the phenomenon in Q4, the Soviet Union maintained a strict system of censorship encompassing all media available at the time. X emerged in response after Stalin's era as a form of dissident activity in which individuals would make copies of censored works by hand and pass them on. Name X.



Visual question:
This Soviet biologist led a movement as part of which he had thousands of biologists jailed or executed, destroying biological research at the time. The movement was eventually denounced as dangerous pseudoscience. Name him. PUBLIC DOMAIN

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Number of total runs Kohli scored in ODI. **Ans: 14,000 runs in 287 innings**
2. Kohil scored these many wins in test cricket as captain of India. **Ans: 40 wins out of 68 matches**
3. Number of double 100s Kohli has scored. **Ans: 7**
4. Kohli scored the most runs in a single edition of the ODI World Cup in this year. **Ans: 2023**
5. Number of times Kohli got the player of the match award, and player of the series award in T20I. **Ans: 15 and 7 respectively**
6. Kohli is also the player to have scored these many runs in the IPL. **Ans: 8,004**
Visual: Kohli completed this milestone on September 30, 2024. **Ans: 27,000 international runs**
Early Birds: Siddhartha Viswanathan| Joe V.R.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian
S. Upendran

"What are you reading?"

"An interesting article on grandparents as baby sitters. Want to have a dekko?"

"A what?"

"A dekko."

"'Dekko'! But isn't it a Hindi word meaning 'to look'?"

"Yes, that's right. 'Dekko' is a Hindi word. It is used in English in certain fixed expressions like 'have a dekko at something'. For example, I can say, 'The doctor had a dekko at my wound and said it didn't require stitches'.

"Can I say, 'Have a dekko at my new car'?"

"You most certainly can, provided you have a new car! The word 'dekko', by the way, is used mainly in British English."

"And I suppose it is used mainly in informal contexts."

"That's correct."

"You know, I'm worried about my test next week. What do you think I should do?"

"Pull up your socks."

"Pull up my socks! You know I never wear shoes. I usually wear..."

" 'Pull up your socks' is an idiomatic expression meaning 'to make an effort to improve one's performance'. The coach told Sridhar to pull up his socks, or he'd lose in the first round."

"Can I say, The teachers said that if I didn't pull my socks up, I'd fail the test'."

"You can. But if I were you, I wouldn't be a bit worried about the test."

"Is it ok to say that?"

"Say what?"

"Not a 'bit' worried!"

"Of course. 'Not a bit' means 'not at all'. For example, if I say, 'I'm not a bit tired', it means I'm not at all tired."

"So if somebody asks if I'm interested in going to America and I'm not, can I say 'Not a bit'?"

"Definitely. But if you did say that, people would think you're crazy."

"I'm not a bit worried about what others think of me."

"Good for you. Now then, would you like to have a dekko at Madhuri's new film, *Raja*?"

"No thanks. I need to study for the test. You did say I needed to pull up my socks, didn't you?"

Published in The Hindu on August 8, 1995

Word of the day

Enunciation:
the articulation of speech regarded from the point of view of its intelligibility to the audience

Synonym: diction

Usage: *All of the debaters put forth their arguments with clear enunciation.*

Pronunciation:
newsth.live/enunciationpro

International Phonetic Alphabet:/ɪˌnʌn.sɪˈeɪ.ʃən/, /ɪˌnʌn.ʃɪˈeɪ.ʃən/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

From *darshini*s to fine dining, eating out in Bengaluru is getting pricier

Escalating costs have not deterred youngsters from continuing to eat out, with many complaining that they have no time to cook

A plate of biryani that used to cost ₹180 two years ago is now ₹230, and the cost of even a simple dosa has gone up by ₹10-₹15, say customers. FILE PHOTOS

Yemen S.
BENGALURU

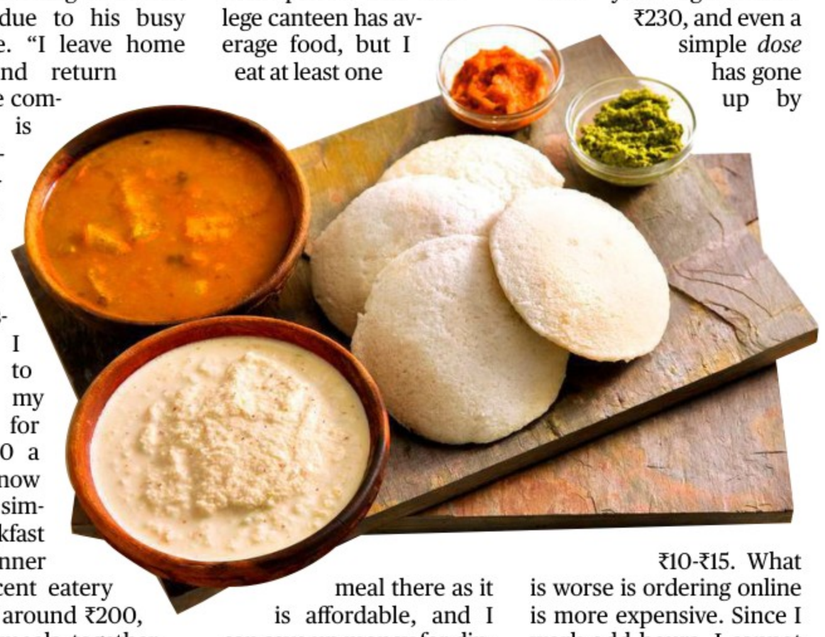
The Bruhat Bengaluru Hoteliers Association (BBHA) recently announced that the cost of filter coffee is expected to go up by 10% to 15%. It cited a sharp increase of ₹100 per kilogram in coffee powder and an anticipated rise in milk prices after the State Budget presentation in the coming month.

While this move of restaurateurs is a direct response to soaring raw material expenses, it reflects a broader trend related to the cost of eating out sharply going up in Bengaluru, in various places from the regular "idli-vade" fare in the ubiquitous *darshini*s to fine dining restaurants. Hoteliers say this is driven by steadily rising operational costs, from labour to rents to commodity prices.

The Hindu spoke to youngsters from across the city, who mostly eat out due to their busy schedule or lack of availability of resources, and most complained that eating out is burning a hole in their pockets.

Commute time

For 28-year-old Rohit M., an IT professional in Whitefield, cooking is not an option due to his busy schedule. "I leave home early and return late. The commute is physically draining, so cooking is out of the question. I used to manage my meals for ₹200-300 a day but now even a simple breakfast and dinner at a decent eatery cost me around ₹200, and all meals together go up to ₹500-700 every day. It is getting harder to sustain this lifestyle," said Rohit.



Vikram R., an engineering student in Koramangala, had a similar story. "I live alone and do not have time to cook. Earlier, I could get a good meal for ₹100-₹120, but now even the *darshini*s have hiked their prices. The college canteen has average food, but I eat at least one meal there as it is affordable, and I can save up money for dinner or breakfast."

Kanchana, another IT professional, who stays in a paying guest accommodation in BTM. Layout, said eating out and ordering from online platforms have got expensive over the last two years. "The PG food is bad, so I eat out most days. A plate of biryani that used to cost ₹180 two years ago is now ₹230, and even a simple *dose* has gone up by ₹10-₹15. What is worse is ordering online is more expensive. Since I work odd hours, I cannot go out to eat and prefer ordering online. But anything you order is one-and-a-half times what it is at the restaurant," she explained.

Mahesh Shivapure, who works at a popular bar, skips a meal to avoid excessive spending. "I work from 3 p.m. to 12 a.m., which is a very odd shift. Since I sleep late and wake up late, I go to work and have a brunch that is served for free at the cafeteria, instead of having breakfast at home or outside. I manage to have dinner at the workplace because I do not want to spend ₹200-300 just for a meal outside. If I miss a meal at work, I avoid ordering online and go to food carts instead of restaurants as they are more affordable," Shivapure said.

People still eat out

Rithuparna Sharma, owner of S.N. Refreshments, a *darshini*-style eatery in J.P. Nagar, said customers are busy and continue to eat out.

"Even if people claim eating outside has become expensive, we have not noticed a decrease in customer footfall. In fact, with their busy schedules, we see more people opt to eat out because they hardly have time to prepare food at home," Sharma said.

The manager at Upahara Darshini in BTM. Layout, who did not wish to be named, said bachelors prefer eating out no matter the cost.

"We have not received suggestions or complaints from customers saying food is expensive at our *darshini* since we opened 10 years ago. Even if prices go up, not many have the time to cook, especially the IT professionals. They have no option but to eat out," he explained.

Sandeep Sadanandan, Head of Culinary at Byg Ventures, said eating out has become expensive but is not adding to profit for eateries, restaurants and bars.

"Bengaluru is a competitive market and there is food inflation now. But, food is not as expensive as in Delhi or Mumbai. Food is costlier as the cost of ingredients has gone up. However, customers' spending power has also gone up equally," he argued.

Sadanandan said more pubs and restaurants have come up in Bengaluru over the last two years but no one has benefitted. "Even though I am in the industry, I am unable to keep track of how many eateries come up in the city every day. Because of this, despite the increase in the cost of food, pubs and restaurants in Bengaluru are not earning as much as they used to do, since the competition is so much now. Earlier people travelled long distances and hours for a nice meal and drink. It was exclusive and not very expensive. But now the concept of neighbourhood pubs or restaurants is not benefitting anybody, be it for customers or businesses," Sadanandan contended.

Ordering online

P.C. Rao, president, BBHA, said restaurants remain affordable against all odds, but ordering online has become more expensive. "Bengaluru is the most affordable city for a meal in India, considering both quality and quantity," he claimed.

"You still get coffee or idly for ₹10 at some restaurants, which you will not find anywhere else.

"Some *darshini*s are so affordable that one can have their breakfast at less than ₹50 and full plate thali meal at less than ₹80," he said.

"However, if people are ordering online instead of walking into restaurants, then there is a definite shift in the prices. Almost 35% of sales of a restaurant in an order is given away to these online platforms, forcing restaurants to hike the price of meals on their online menus," Rao explained.

Vidyut looks to expand battery-as-a-service financing biz

By unbundling batteries from electic vehicles and offering them on a pay-per-km subscription basis, the Bengaluru-based EV ecosystem platform reduces upfront 3W EV costs by 35-40%, making them significantly cheaper than ICE vehicles

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Vidyut, a full-stack electric vehicle ecosystem platform based out of Bengaluru, has raised $2.5 million (₹21 crore approximately) in funding from global fintech investor Flourish Ventures. The funding will fuel the expansion of Vidyut's battery-as-a-service offerings in both passenger and commercial EV segments.

"With proven unit economics, strong 15% month-on-month growth, and long-term OEM partnerships, this investment will help us scale our innovative financing and lifecycle solutions across new vehicle segments," said Xitij Kothi, co-founder, Vidyut.

"Vidyut has solved one of EV financing's biggest challenges – battery degradation risk. By analyzing real-time performance data across state of health, discharge patterns, and usage metrics, we accurately predict battery life and value. This data-driven approach enables us to offer usage-based financing that aligns with actual asset performance, making EVs both affordable and financially viable for businesses in a way traditional finance cannot replicate. We're excited to partner with Flourish Ventures to make EVs accessible and profitable for businesses nationwide."

Unique offering

Vidyut was founded in 2021 by ex-Swiggy and Bounce executives Xitij Kothi and Gaurav Srivastava. By unbundling batteries from EVs and offering them on a pay-per-km subscription basis, Vidyut reduced upfront 3W EV costs by 35-40%, making them significantly cheaper than ICE vehicles.

"We at Flourish Ventures believe that finance will have a key role in enabling actions towards climate change. As the economy transitions to sustainable solutions like electric vehicles, access to credit will play a key role in adoption in India," said Harsh Gupta, Principal, Flourish Ventures.

"With its unique battery-as-a-service offering, Vidyut provides innovative financial solutions that help users reduce their upfront costs while addressing common concerns around battery life and replacement costs. We are continually impressed by the team and the growth they have demonstrated, and we look forward to their continued impact in accelerating the transition to climate-friendly solutions." In 2023, Vidyut expanded its offering to include EV resale and lifecycle management solutions. In September 2024, the company entered the passenger EV market through a partnership with JSW MG Motor India, marking India's first BaaS model for four-wheelers that cuts upfront vehicle costs by 30%.

By analysing real-time performance data across state of health, discharge patterns, and usage metrics, we accurately predict battery life and value, says Xitij Kothi, co-founder, Vidyut. FILE PHOTO

With key industry partners like TATA Motors, JSW MG Motor India, Mahindra Last Mile Mobility, Piaggio, Euler Motors, and a distribution network across 30 cities, Vidyut has also helped micro-entrepreneurs and fleet operators increase their earnings by 10-15% through EV adoption.

Resale platform

The start-up also launched an EV resale platform for the three-wheeler commercial vehicle segment, which manages the entire process–from inspection and valuation to sale and RTO documentation. This new platform has streamlined the resale process for commercial EV owners and has helped customers realise upto 10-15% better than ICE counterparts in secondary markets.

To date, Vidyut has raised $16.5 million (around ₹143 crore) in capital from investors including 3one4 Capital Saison Capital, Zephyr Peacock, and Flourish Ventures.

Xitij Kothi and Gaurav Srivastava SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 27, 1975

Govt. Bill defeated in Karnataka Council

Bangalore, Feb. 26. The Government was put in an embarrassing position in the Legislative Council today when the Karnataka Ministers 'salaries and Allowance (Amendment) Bill, 1975 was defeated by the Opposition. The Bill moved by the Leader of the House, Mr. M. Hutchmasthi Gowda was lost at the consideration stage itself.

The Opposition, led by Mr. Ramakrishna Hegde, in a surprise move, pressed for a division when the motion on consideration was moved. The motion was defeated by three votes - 14 in favour and 17 against. The Bill which originated in the Legislative Council, aimed to replace an ordinance issued earlier.

Tamil Nadu Stand on Cauvery Irrational: Urs

Bangalore, Feb. 26: The Karnataka Chief Minister Mr. Devaraj Urs said today that while Karnataka was prepared to extend its full co-operation in arriving at an agreed solution to the Cauvery waters dispute, "it shall not be at the expense of our legitimate interest".

Mr. Urs accused the Tamil Nadu Government of completely going back on the November 1974 understanding at the recent Delhi conference. Tamil Nadu "which has already appropriated water disproportionate to its share should realise the need for a live and let live approach," Mr. Urs said.

Referring to reports that the Centre was planning another round of discussions with the Chief Minister, Mr. Urs said he would be happy to participate and extend his cooperation.

This year's edition of Kala for Vidya titled, Ephemeral Permanence: Stories of Nature, explores the balance between mankind and the world they inhabit

When Nature nurtures

Ruth Dhanaraj

Kala for Vidya is an annual fundraiser that supports the education of underprivileged children. Presented by the Rotary Club of Bangalore, this year marks the 18th edition of this initiative and has been curated by Amita Shenoy, founder of the Shenoy Art Foundation in Bengaluru.

This exhibition will feature the works of as many as 41 artists from all over India, and over 100 works of art including paintings, sculptures, graphics and more, will be on display.

According to curator Amita Shenoy, the idea behind this show was to bring artists and the community together. "The artists contribute by creating works that resonate with the theme, and the audience buy it knowing full well that the proceeds go towards a charitable cause, and at the same time, they get a chance to enjoy great art. It's a win-win for everyone," says Amita, who has curated this show for Kala for Vidya, a couple of times in the past as well.

Titled Ephemeral Permanence: Stories of Nature, this year's exhibition took shape over a period of six months, with Rotarians and Amita working together "with no other expectations, but the cause."

Amita says she centred the show around the idea of permanence within the fleeting. "Though the wonders in Nature appear short-lived, since they are all cyclical they are permanent in a way. For instance, you enjoy the beauty of a sunrise, knowing it is temporary. However, the sun will rise the following day too. This is the cycle of growth in Nature that applies to our spiritual being as well. There is a connection with Nature and humans, and each artist has revealed their vision of this idea in their own unique fashion."

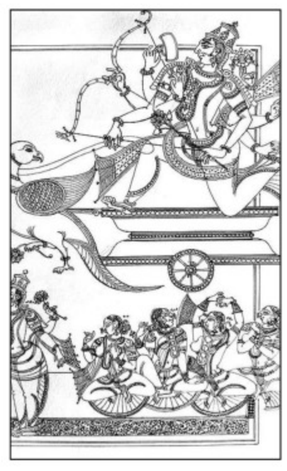
Colours of the rainbow (Clockwise from left) Art work by Manish Chavda, Babu Jattakar, Janardhan Rao H, Pradeep Kumar DM, VG Venugopal, Sachin Jaltare and Vijay Hagargundi, on display at Ephemeral Permanance. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

This notion of renewal, restoration and rejuvenation, captivated the creativity of many an artist.

Mumbai-based artist Sujata Achrekar who is participating in the show for the first time, says once she heard about the cause she was eager to create for it. "For this show, I have attempted to capture a self-aware state of being where one is unruffled in any situation. People attain that frame of mind in different ways – philosophy, meditation or religion – and that spiritual journey is what I attempt to capture in my work," says Sujata.

"That is the reason one can find allusions to miniatures and motifs such as chakras and brahmi flowers in my work," adds the artist whose preferred medium is acrylic on canvas, and occasionally, gold foil.

Another first-timer to the show is Raghava KK from Bengaluru who says the theme resonated deeply with him. "What we know about Nature is that it is mysterious and unknowing, at the same time calming and familiar. That was my response to the curated prompt I received from Amita for this show," says Raghava.



The idea behind this show by Kala for Vidya was to bring artists and the community together

"Besides, as an artist, the only promise I can offer is that I will keep changing and not be confined to one particular style which is why the theme appealed to me," he says, adding that the idea of the show to fund the education of children won him over instantly.

Works by artists from all over India such as Amit Bhar, Manish Chavda, Amol Pawar, Laxman Aelay and RB Bhaskar will be on display alongside their counterparts in the city, including Ganapati Hedge, Manjunath Wali and Janardhan Rao Havanje who creates with *kaavi kale*, a traditional art form from the Konkan region.

"Each one has used their own medium, style and expression, to interpret this concept and depict how it speaks to them. Visitors will get to see over 100 different expressions of this notion at the venue," says Amita.

Ephemeral Permanence will be inaugurated on February 28 at 6pm. It will be on display on March 1 and 2 at ITC Windsor.

Passion for the arts Arpita Banerjee. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Three times the ragas

Praveen Sudevan

Banyan Tree's classical music festival, Teen Prahar, is set to return to Bengaluru for its 18th edition on February 27 at Chowdiah Memorial Hall. Celebrated for its distinctive approach to *raga* presentation, the festival guides listeners through three distinct time zones of the day, which is reflected in its name – Teen Prahar (where '*prahar*' refers to a subdivision of the day in Sanskrit, and '*teen*' means three).

Since its inception in 2006, Teen Prahar has carved a niche for itself by bringing together musicians at different stages of their careers – budding talents, rising stars, and legendary masters – on the same stage. It is a format that not only nurtures young artists but also gives audiences the chance to experience classical music "in its purest and most dynamic form," according to the organisers. Over the years, it has grown into one of India's most anticipated classical music festivals, with editions in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Kolkata.

In the upcoming edition, the evening opens with a performance by the Shishya's Collective Ensemble, featuring young talents Shruti Vishwakarma (vocal), Swar Sharma (vocal), Sandeep Mishra (sarangi), Hrishikesh Majumdar (flute), Rohit Deo (tabla), and Tejas Katoti (harmonium). For these musicians, performing at Teen Prahar is both an honour and a milestone in their journey.

Time of day Artistes in different stages of their musical journey will perform at Teen Prahar's raga-based event. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"It is a privilege to be sharing the stage with stalwarts such as Ustad Shujaat Khan *ji* and Pandit Venkatesh Kumar *ji*," says flautist Hrishikesh, "Performing on such a platform is truly special and it adds to my experience and career."

Following the young ensemble, audiences will be treated to a mesmerising sitar recital by Ustad Shujaat Khan, one of the greatest exponents of the instrument. When asked about how he selects *ragas* for an event like Teen Prahar, he explains the process is deeply rooted in convention.

"*Raga* selection happens on the basis of tradition – what has already been prescribed by the ancient traditions of our music. Each part of the day has specific *ragas* dedicated to it, meant to evoke and mirror the moods and feelings one experiences during those times," he says. "Beyond that, it also depends on my mood and temperament at the moment."

While studio recordings have their place, for Ustad Shujaat Khan, nothing compares to the energy of a live performance.

"Live performances make for the foundational essence of our music. This is how it is meant to be presented – through the meeting of energies between the audience and the artist. That connection is essential, and it cannot happen in a studio recording."

Rounding off the evening is the acclaimed Hindustani classical vocalist Pandit Venkatesh Kumar. His performance promises to be a fitting finale, bringing both depth and devotion to the Teen Prahar experience.

What makes this festival special is its ability to offer something fresh with each edition. In addition to well-known classical forms, Teen Prahar has also played a key role in reviving lesser-heard traditions such as Haveli Sangeet and Dhrupad and giving rare instruments like the Esraj, Surbahar, and Hindustani Cello a platform.

"Performing lesser-heard *ragas* is always an experience; not just for the audience but for us as musicians as well," says Hrishikesh.

Teen Prahar is on February 27, 6pm onwards at Chowdiah Memorial Hall. Tickets on BookMyShow.

Discover the intricacies of three Indian classical dance forms – Kathak, Odissi and Kuchipudi at Anaadya Taal Tarang, on the same stage.

Presented by Anaadya Performing Arts, a dance school founded by Arpita Banerjee, the evening will open with a production titled *Shurpanakhi* by Odissi dancer Vandana Supriya Kasaravalli. This will be followed by a Kuchipudi dance recital by Prateeksha Kashi, daughter of veteran dancer Vyjayanthi Kashi.

The second half commences with a Kathak recital by Arpita and the Anaadya ensemble with a 'Saraswati Vandana', choreographed by Arpita and music by Puru Dadheech, followed by a solo presentation by Arpita and later a dance composed by Guru Geetanjali Lal and choreographed by Arpita specifically for the ensemble.

Anaadya was started by Arpita in 2019 with a passion to teach dance. "This is the first edition of Taal Tarang," says the dancer, who trained under Bandana Sen (Kolkata) from when she was five.

Arpita went on to win the State-level competition, West Bengal State Academy Contest in 1995 at the age of 11. Once she moved to Bengaluru in 2002, she trained under Murali Mohan and Nandini Mehta

"I started teaching Kathak way before Anaadya was formed. Our Indian classical art forms are taught in the guru-shishya parampara, where knowledge is imparted by a guru to their student. I follow the same motto; I want to impart my knowledge of dance to the next generation."

Arpita has degrees of Visharad (BA), Alankar (MA) and Shiksha Visharad (B.Ed) in Kathak. She is an empanelled artiste with ICCR, and accredited by Doordarshan as an A-grade artist.

Most of her students are thriving, Arpita says, and some of them will be performing at Taal Tarang. Arpita also started a children's classical dance festival, Anaadya Navapallava, last year to promote young dancers.

"I dream of organising more annual dance festivals." Arpita was adjudged the second best dancer in the National Music and Dance Conference, Pune (2009) and was conferred with the title of 'Nritya Shiromani' at Cuttack Mahotsav (2014).

Taal Tarang is open to all, says Arpita.

Taal Tarang is on February 28 at Seva Sadan, Malleswaram, 5.30pm onwards. Open to all.

Venky's last move

IIHS Screens is set to host a special screening of *Salaam Venky*, a deeply moving Hindi film that brings to life the true story of Kolavennu Venkatesh, a young chess player battling Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD). The event will take place on February 28, at 5pm, at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements Bengaluru City campus in Sadashiva Nagar.

Directed by National Award-winning filmmaker Revathy, *Salaam Venky* follows Venkatesh's courageous fight for the right to die with dignity while ensuring his organs could be donated before becoming unusable. His legal battle, backed by his determined mother Sujata, ignited a nationwide debate on euthanasia, a conversation that has gained renewed relevance as Karnataka recently became the first state to implement the Supreme Court's directive on passive euthanasia.

Reel life A still from *Salaam Venky*, director Revathy. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The film, inspired by Shrikant Murthy's book *The Last Hurrah*, captures Venkatesh's resilience and the emotional and ethical dilemmas surrounding end-of-life choices. Despite being diagnosed with an incurable condition, his indomitable spirit and determination allowed him to accomplish more than most do in a lifetime. The film also sheds light on the role of family, medical ethics, and the legal struggles associated with euthanasia in India.

Following the screening, audiences will have an opportunity to engage in a discussion with Revathy and Nirupama Santosh, Lead of the IIHS Media Lab. This interactive session promises to provide insights into the film's making, the challenges of portraying such a sensitive subject, and the evolving legal and ethical discourse on euthanasia.

The screening is open to the public, with registrations available at urbanlens.iihs.co.in/register-now. For more details, email urbanlens@iihs.ac.in or call 080-67606666.

From Page One

DKS firm on not giving up KPCC president's post

Meanwhile, Mr. Shivakumar is learnt to have told the Congress leadership that the present organisational arrangement in the State should be allowed to continue, to oversee the upcoming local body polls and construction of the party offices in 100 Assembly constituencies.

Earlier in the month, Ministers H.C. Mahadevappa, K.N. Rajanna, G. Parameshwara, and Satish Jarkiholi had gone to Delhi and apparently pleaded before the party high command to execute its commitment made in May 2023, that Mr. Shivakumar would continue as KPCC president only till the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. However, the high command appears to have not given much credence to their demand.

Meanwhile, Housing Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan said, "The Chief Minister's chair is not vacant, and the party president's chair is also not vacant. Mr. Shivakumar holds the president's chair, and Mr. Siddaramaiah holds the Chief Minister's chair. A discussion can happen only when a position is vacant."

He said Mr. Siddaramaiah was "like fire and none can touch him".

Tunnel operation likely to be completed in 2 days: Minister

Efforts are focused on dewatering and desilting the Telangana tunnel simultaneously; gas, plasma cutters are being used to remove debris and silt, with two 100 HP motors installed for dewatering

Ravi Reddy
P. Laxma Reddy
HYDERABAD

Rescue operation to trace the eight persons missing after a portion of the Srisailam Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel collapsed last week hinges on the recommendations of the high-level team of Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to completely dewater and start de-silting operations simultaneously.

Telangana Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy revealed that the rescue operation at the SLBC tunnel in Domalpenta of Nagarkurnool district, would be intensified at full stroke to locate the missing workers.

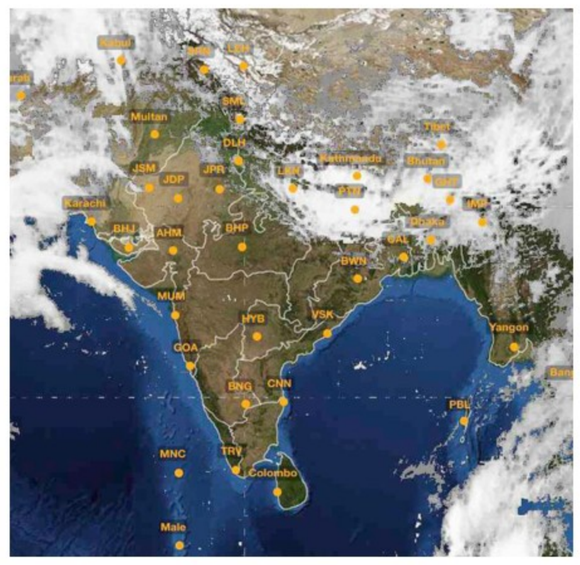
A medical camp set up on Wednesday at the SLBC project site in Nagarkurnool district where a portion of a tunnel has collpased. PTI

A team from the BRO, along with Army, NDRF and executing agency officials, after a visit to site on Wednesday had given certain recommendations for expediting the rescue operations. The Minister expressed confidence that the operation would be completed within two days. Briefing the media, Mr. Reddy revealed that a concrete plan had been devised in consultation with experts.

The plan involves dewatering and de-silting simultaneously, using gas and plasma cutters to remove debris and silt. Two 100 HP motors have been installed to aid dewatering. Despite challenges, officials remain hopeful about the survival of the trapped workers.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 15.00 HRS)

Forecast for Thursday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall/snowfall likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal. Hot & humid conditions likely in isolated pockets of Gujarat, Konkan & Goa and coastal Karnataka

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	30.5	15.3	Kozhikode	—	36.1	25.5
Ahmedabad	—	36.8	21.4	Kurnool	—	36.9	20.9
Aizawl	—	29.5	12.6	Lucknow	—	29.2	13.5
Allahabad	—	30.6	12.6	Madurai	0.2	34.0	23.1
Bengaluru	—	31.9	19.4	Mangaluru	—	37.0	23.4
Bhopal	—	31.2	12.6	Mumbai	—	38.5	21.0
Bhubaneswar	—	34.0	21.0	Mysuru	—	33.1	18.9
Chandigarh	—	28.9	17.5	New Delhi	—	32.4	15.4
Chennai	—	32.9	26.2	Patna	—	28.1	16.2
Coimbatore	—	33.8	21.2	Port Blair	10	30.5	25.6
Dehradun	—	29.0	14.2	Puducherry	—	32.0	23.0
Gangtok	—	17.8	8.0	Pune	—	37.2	20.2
Goa	—	38.0	25.0	Raipur	—	34.0	19.1
Guwahati	—	28.7	15.2	Ranchi	—	27.1	13.5
Hubballi	—	36.0	19.0	Shillong	—	19.6	8.7
Hyderabad	—	32.2	20.4	Shimla	0.2	20.2	9.4
Imphal	—	27.0	15.3	Srinagar	—	6.6	4.9
Jaipur	—	31.2	18.7	Thiruvananthapuram	—	34.8	25.0
Kochi	—	34.4	26.0	Tiruchi	—	35.1	23.4
Kohima	—	18.8	10.2	Vijayawada	—	33.2	23.2
Kolkata	—	30.2	19.6	Visakhapatnam	—	32.3	24.5

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	116	111	18	210	147	
Bengaluru	35	12	39	70	101	
Chennai	24	10	—	114	102	
Delhi	21	167	65	306	366	
Hyderabad	7	56	44	109	132	
Kolkata	13	51	23	175	147	
Lucknow	9	98	54	244	206	
Mumbai	10	108	23	190	184	
Pune	20	133	45	212	155	
Visakhapatnam	8	35	19	60	83	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Delhi recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 247 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Maihar, Madhya Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 30

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Population, including of Muslims, is stabilising, says Revanth

Syed Mohammed
HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, commenting on the caste survey report recently tabled in the Assembly, has said that the outcome alluded that the population, including of the Muslim community in the State, is witnessing a state of stabilisation.

In an interaction with *The Hindu*, Mr. Revanth Reddy addressed the slight decline in the Muslim population recorded in the caste survey as compared with the findings of the Commission of Inquiry (CoI) to Study the Socio-Economic Conditions of Muslims in Telangana, which was constituted by the earlier Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) government. The CoI, commonly known as the G. Sudhir Committee, reported that the Muslim population stood at 12.68%, whereas the recent caste survey recorded it at 12.56%.

"The last caste census was conducted in 2001. The fact is that the population is stabilising. I am working with data voluntarily shared by the people. A total of 3,54,75,554 people were surveyed. While the Samagra Kutumba Survey had four verticals – BC, SC, ST, and OC – this survey included a fifth vertical. The fifth vertical was Muslim BC and Muslim OC," he said, adding that the entire exercise was closely monitored and supervised. The fifth vertical gave clarity, and showed that the population of OC in Muslims was 2.48% and BC in Muslims was 10.08%, he said.

A. Revanth Reddy

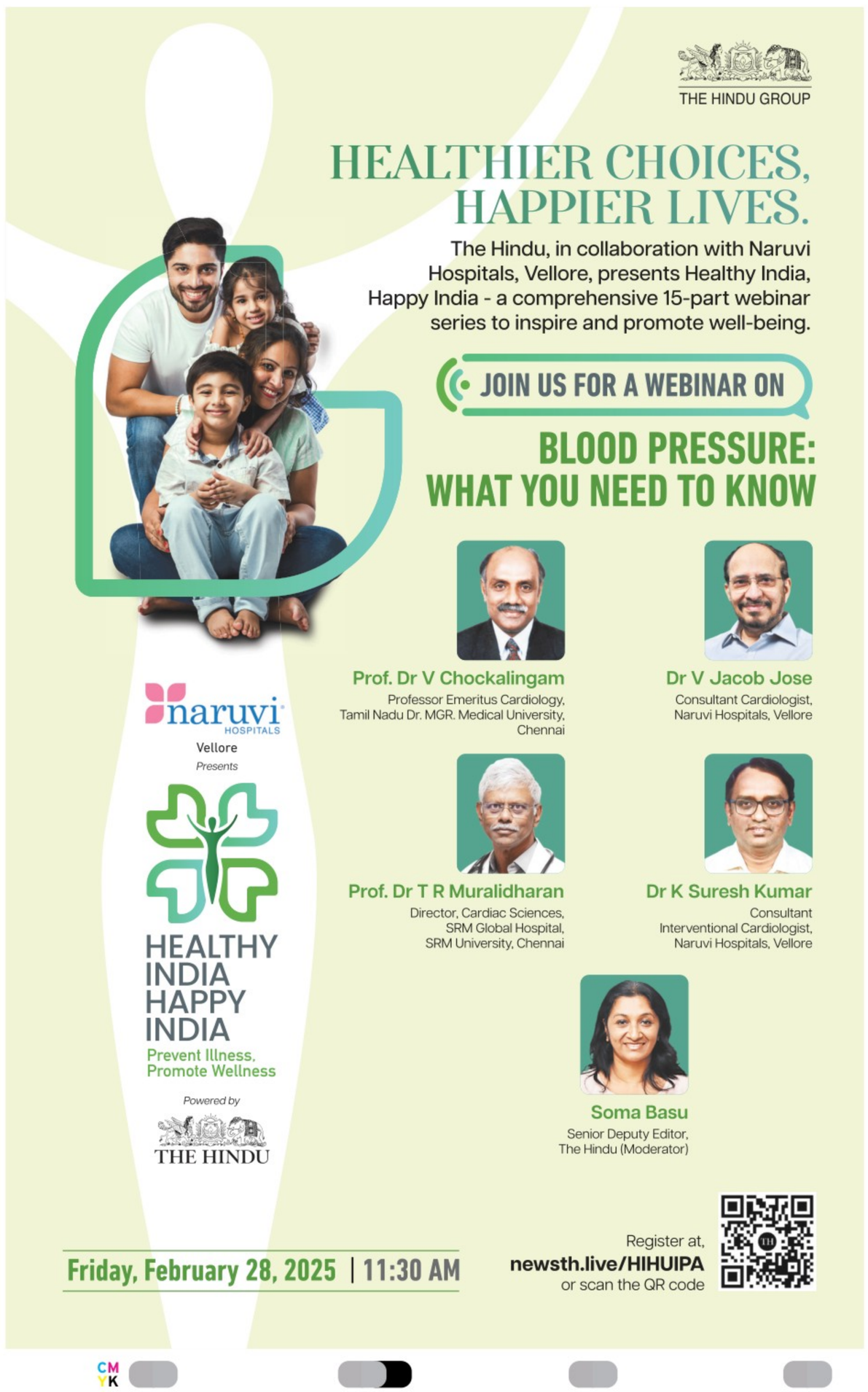
The decline in the total fertility rate of Muslims in India, as shown in the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), which indicated a drop from 2.6 to just over 2.3, was reflected in the caste survey data, were also discussed.

Mr. Revanth Reddy criticised Union Minister Bandi Sanjay for his comments on reservation for Muslim BCs, and in a riposte said that those belonging to Muslim BC including in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Gujarat were enjoying benefits. As many as 29 sub-castes were there in that State, he said. Other States include Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, he pointed out.

Ahead of the Medak-Nizamabad-Adilabad-Karimnagar Graduates' Constituency elections, Mr. Reddy dismissed allegations about an alleged understanding between his party and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He countered that, in fact, it was the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and the BJP that had a truck with each other.

Mr. Revanth Reddy maintained that cases filed against BRS leaders had been taken up by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). However, he pointed out that no further action had been initiated in this regard, raising questions about the nature of the BJP's approach toward its political adversaries.

Regarding BRS allegation mocking his frequent Delhi trips, he said that these meetings entailed seeking help for the State's development, and also to ask for a reduction in the interest rates on loans. The previous government, he said, obtained these loans at high interest rates and that his priority was to bring the State's finances back on track. He also mentioned plans to convince the Centre to direct banks to extend loans at lower interest rates.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Water blight

Scientific risk assessment prior to undertaking tunnel work is a must

Barely a week after the remains of nine coal miners were recovered at the end of a 44-day operation, from a coal mine that had flooded in Assam in early January, a disaster of similar contours, this time in Nagarkurnool, Telangana, is in the making. A portion of the Srisailam Left Bank Canal tunnel, which is under construction, collapsed on February 22, leaving eight workers trapped. What is known so far is that a three-metre section of the roof collapsed due to water seepage. The roof collapse eventually led to the tunnel crumbling over a stretch of eight metres. Despite nine specialised rescue teams, drawn from the Centre and the State governments, working round-the-clock, no significant progress has been made so far on ascertaining the condition of the workers and in devising an optimal rescue plan. So far, the playbook that is being experimented with seems to be inspired by the successful rescue work in the Silkyara Tunnel collapse in Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand, in November 2023, where a portion of the four -kilometre-long tunnel that was being constructed collapsed, stranding 41 workers. It took a 16-day operation that started out with a variety of approaches, including drilling horizontally, and later on vertically, from both ends of the tunnel to reach the stranded workers. In the end, key breakthroughs were achieved by a team of 'rat hole' miners from Assam, who use manual excavation methods that are considered hazardous and deemed illegal.

The key difference between the Silkyara episode and the one in Srisailam is the presence of water. There were 70 workers in the tunnel when a deluge of water and muck suddenly began to gush inside. Barring the eight, the rest escaped, with 13 of them sustaining injuries. However, in the subsequent days, it is the torrential flow that has proved to be a barrier to rescue operations. The history of tunnel-linked disasters globally shows that while rare, they can often be catastrophic. A large proportion of these accidents, studies show, are due to a rupture in aquifers (underground water channels). It is to determine such risks that extensive studies are commissioned to understand the sub-surface geology of a site. A report by the Uttarakhand disaster management authority on the Silkyara episode says that there was insufficient analysis of the rock formations at Silkyara but also that a complete picture of structural deformities cannot be known before tunnelling. While the rescue of the trapped personnel at the Srisailam tunnel is paramount, there has to be a proper investigation by the authorities on the reasons for the collapse and action taken, if evidence emerges of tardy pre-tunnelling analysis.

Slow, unsteady

Influential criminals should not be allowed to evade justice indefinitely

The adage that 'the wheels of justice grind slowly, but grind exceedingly fine' may be true, but there are times when punishment for crimes comes so late that it is hardly recognisable as justice. The patience of a family's long wait for justice may have been rewarded this week, when Congress leader Sajjan Kumar was sentenced to life imprisonment for the killing of a 50-year-old man and his 18-year-old son by a frenzied mob during the anti-Sikh pogrom in Delhi in 1984, but no justice system ought to be proud of a verdict that comes 40 years after the crime. This is the second case in which Mr. Kumar, then a Congress Member of Parliament, has been found guilty of leading a mob. In 2021, the Delhi High Court reversed a trial court judgment acquitting him of overseeing the killing of five people in the same locality, Raj Nagar, and sentenced him to imprisonment for the rest of his life. His involvement in leading the riotous mob was known to many, witnessed by some, but covered up by all those who mattered. The police had initially failed to carry out any genuine investigation, registered omnibus first information reports for many separate incidents, discouraged complainants and witnesses from naming or describing the assailants, and only recorded the loss of property and belongings looted by the mobs that ransacked houses before burning them.

However, public outcry, political activism and the change of regime over the years have ensured that there were mechanisms from time to time to reopen closed probes and record testimony: the Justice Ranganath Misra Commission, the Justice Nanavati Commission and the Jain-Aggarwal Committee. Affidavits filed before these panels, purported contradictions in them, and the question of whether these disclosures were made at the earliest opportunity, have all been exploited by defence lawyers to delay trials over the years; but a few have made it to the very end. These outcomes kept a sliver of hope alive for at least a few victims, the latest being the three women who witnessed Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep being beaten and burnt before their eyes. It is a fact that fixing criminal liability in mob violence is extremely difficult, but the lesson is that the problem of finding credible witnesses should not be compounded by manipulated investigations. Even in this case, the last word has not been said as Mr. Kumar may question the finding of his guilt in appeal. A belated conviction may be seen as proof that the efflux of time need not be an impediment to justice. Or, one may wonder if it is inevitable that influential people can evade the law long enough so that they have a full and untrammelled political career before their role is proved.

A leap backward for maternity entitlements

Even as State after State is splurging on cash transfers for women, the most vulnerable among them, pregnant women, continue to be deprived of their legal right to maternity benefits. Worse, whatever little used to be paid to them seems to be shrinking. The main responsibility for this lies with the central government.

Under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013, all pregnant women (except those already covered in the formal sector) are entitled to maternity benefits of ₹6,000 a child. At today's prices, this would mean ₹12,000 at the very least. Even that, of course, is a pittance. Still, affirming the principle of universal maternity entitlements was a groundbreaking feature of the NFSA. Even in relatively well-off households, pregnant women are often deprived of nutritious food, health care or rest time. Maternity benefits can help them to look after themselves and the newborn child.

Meagre as they are, maternity benefits under the NFSA are yet to be delivered. The central government is making a pretence of doing so under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY). The PMMVY's benefits, however, are restricted to one child a family, recently extended to a second child if it is a girl. This restriction is a blatant violation of the Act. Further, the benefits have been arbitrarily reduced to ₹5,000 for the first child.

Jean Drèze

is Visiting Professor at the Department of Economics, Ranchi University

Reetika Khera

is Professor of Economics at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi

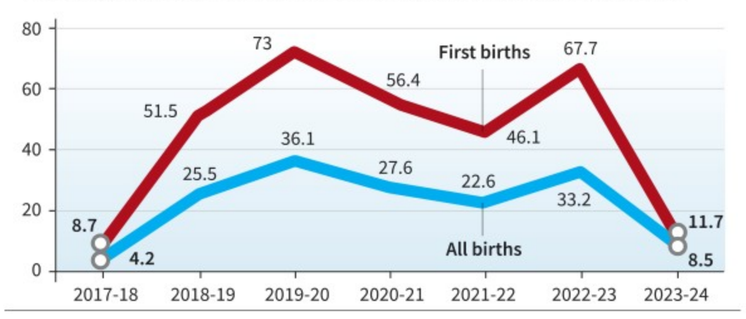
All pregnant women in India are entitled to maternity benefits, but most of them have not got a single rupee in recent years

Scant information

Even these restricted and reduced benefits are being denied to large numbers of entitled women. This failure is well hidden, because the Ministry of Women and Child Development discloses very little information on the PMMVY. The Ministry seems unaware of Section 4 of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, which calls for pro-active disclosure of basic information. Even the simplest of the PMMVY's statistics are not in the public domain.

The Ministry, however, did respond to our RTI queries, on the PMMVY. Based on this information, we have estimated the PMMVY's effective coverage, defined as the proportion of pregnant women who receive at least one instalment of PMMVY benefits. This is a broad definition: the first instalment is just ₹3,000, and strict conditionalities apply to the second instalment (front-loaded for second-child girls). The estimates are sobering: effective coverage peaked at an unimpressive 36% in 2019-20 and declined sharply after that, except for a partial revival in 2022-23. In 2023-24, effective coverage crashed to just 9% (*see graph*).

This crash is also visible in the Budget's figures. Central government spending on the PMMVY was at an all-time low of ₹870 crore in 2023-24 – barely one third of the corresponding figure five years earlier, that too in money terms. To cover 90% of all births at just ₹6,000 a birth, the PMMVY would require a total budget of at least ₹12,000 crore.



Source: Official PMMVY data obtained under RTI; birth numbers were estimated from birth rates and projected population.

The official line

We discussed these figures with the officials concerned in the Department of Women and Child Development, at the central and State levels. They did not deny that the PMMVY had come to a virtual standstill in 2023-24. They blamed this on major changes in software and implementation processes that were introduced in late 2023. Further scrutiny of the data suggests that the main problem was not a reduction in applications, but a reduced disbursement rate. According to one official, there were software problems "every day".

The problem, however, did not begin in 2023-24. The PMMVY, launched in 2017, has been plagued with complications all along. More than a few of them are related to Aadhaar-based payments and digital tyranny. There have been numerous reports that have drawn attention to these complications and their exclusionary effects. Instead of responding to these ground reports, however, the central government created more complications in 2023-24, with disastrous consequences for Indian women. For the government, of course, the reduction in PMMVY expenditure is a good deal. Could this be one reason why the tendency to create hurdles is so resilient?

The examples of Tamil Nadu and Odisha

Meanwhile, States such as Tamil Nadu and Odisha have shown the possibility of designing simple and effective maternity-benefit schemes, from 1987 and 2009 onwards, respectively. The monetary support offered by them is more substantial than under the PMMVY – ₹10,000 a child in Odisha and ₹18,000 a child in Tamil Nadu. In Odisha, the amount was doubled ahead of the 2024 general election. In Tamil Nadu, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) promised to increase it to ₹24,000 in its 2021 election manifesto, and the party appears to be waiting for the next election to implement this promise. The PMMVY benefits, for their part, have never been raised, despite being lower than NFSA norms in the first place.

Not only are the amounts higher in Odisha and Tamil Nadu, but their implementation is also much better. Figures reported in Odisha's Economic Survey suggest that maternity benefits covered about 64% of all births there in 2021-22 (the latest year for which data are available). In Tamil Nadu, coverage was 84% in 2023-24, when the all-India coverage under the PMMVY was below 10%. The contrast could hardly be sharper.

In the formal sector, Indian women enjoy a full 26 weeks of paid maternity leave (based on a 2017 amendment of the Maternity Benefits Act 1961), compared with a World Health Organization norm of 14 weeks. In the unorganised sector, they get a flat ₹5,000 if they are lucky enough to survive all the hoops they have to jump through for PMMVY benefits. These double standards are mind-boggling.

The time has come to admit that the PMMVY is a flop show. The central government seems to be more concerned with saving money than with helping pregnant women. As a result, it has ruined a programme that could have proved very useful and popular. It also stands in flagrant violation of the NFSA. The entire programme needs to be revamped in line with the letter and spirit of the Act. The benefits should also be raised and indexed to the price level. The entire society stands to gain from better public support for pregnant women.

The bigger tragedy is the Railways and its systemic inertia

In the cacophony of religious fervour for a holy dip at the Kumbh, amidst bustling railway stations, jostling crowds, and ceaseless proclamations by Indian Railways about the number of train services and the passengers ferried to Prayagraj, lies an inconvenient truth: the approach to passenger safety and convenience is at best tragically outdated, and at worst, a harbinger of disaster.

It is a bitter pill to swallow, but swallow it we must, for the recent tragedy – the stampede at New Delhi railway station on February 15 – has once again exposed the chinks in armour of the Indian Railways. It has laid bare systemic failures born not of resource constraints but of an indifference to basic needs.

The half-truths

The first question is unavoidable. Was the stampede at New Delhi avoidable? The answer: Yes, it was. Amidst all the noise and shifting of blame, there are certain half-truths that demand scrutiny, for the halves that remain hidden also conceal the seeds of tragedy. In any crowd control scenario, a stampede is averted by ensuring smooth, largely unidirectional movement, eliminating bottlenecks, and implementing robust barricading with adequate staffing of security personnel. All these fundamental principles were glaringly ignored.

Railway representatives have repeatedly asserted that no platform changes were made. Yet, the last-minute announcement of a special unreserved train to Prayagraj on platform 12, when there was already a massive crowd of unreserved passengers on platform 14 for the Prayagraj Express, was tantamount to a change, triggering a surge of chaotic, conflicting movements.

It is also learnt – although not verified yet – that the control room, equipped with CCTV coverage, failed to stop the escalators, notorious for becoming bottlenecks in such situations. Moreover, the number of Railway Protection Force personnel on the one hand and the security arrangements and barricading on the other were inadequate.

The claim that such a massive crowd, particularly unreserved passengers, was unforeseen, defies logic. The Ministry of Railways was proud to announce that over 15 lakh passengers travelled in nearly 350 trains to Prayagraj in February. A simple calculation shows this translates to nearly 300 unreserved passengers in a coach, packed like sardines. New Delhi is a focal point for travellers from North India, and the magnitude of the crowd could have been anticipated based on recent significant 'bathing days' at the Kumbh. The Indian Railway's assertion that it was caught off-guard by a sudden surge in ticket sales towards the evening is a weak line of defence.

Sudhanshu Mani

is a retired General Manager, Indian Railways, leader of the Railways' 'Vande Bharat' project and an independent consultant

Tragedies such as the stampede in Delhi will continue to be written off as unfortunate inevitabilities rather than preventable failures

The blame has been subtly shifted onto travellers – that they congregated in huge numbers, that they bought large numbers of tickets, and that they did not heed announcements. Yet, none of this was unprecedented.

Festival times always draw huge crowds, and special trains are run routinely to ferry passengers, primarily to the eastern parts of the country. Unreserved tickets are typically sold in large numbers on such occasions, and there are established protocols to handle this. All that the Delhi division of the Indian Railways had to do was to replicate the tried-and-tested *Chhath* arrangements that have been implemented for decades.

Conflicting statements

Certain crowd control measures introduced after the tragedy – such as additional security personnel, the creation of holding areas, better CCTV monitoring, and stopping the sale of platform tickets – are hardly rocket science. Were it not for the grief of the victims' families, it would be tempting to call this tragedy a comeuppance for the Railways amidst its grandiose proclamations. On one hand, it reveals the Railways' hollow attempt to sell a commodity it does not possess: ensuring dignified travel for devotees. On the other, it exposes the Railways' failure to implement basic crowd control measures well within its capability.

For almost a day, the Railways kept changing its narrative – from denial to dilution to obfuscation and staggering insensitivity. There were conflicting statements by various spokespersons, culminating in the grotesque spectacle of distributing *ex gratia* payments to the families bereaved even before confirming the death toll. As if that were not bad enough, statements from responsible government quarters suggested having a probe into alleged conspiratorial "fake news" triggering the stampede. This blame game, marked by cynicism, echoes the Railways' habit of prematurely attributing every mishap or near-accident to sabotage – despite not a single case having been proven.

History is replete with warnings, yet the regime in the Railways, which includes those earlier too, seems to behave like the student who refuses to learn. There have been similar tragedies before, which include the stampede at Elphinstone Road railway station in Mumbai in September 2017 and at Allahabad station during the Kumbh Mela in February 2013. But the past, as they say, is prologue, but only if one is willing to learn from it.

Another flaw

Disturbingly, the first step towards accountability is already a misstep. The "high-level" inquiry is to be conducted by senior railway executives, overseeing the very departments that may be culpable. In stark contrast, even a single fatality in a train accident warrants an investigation by the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS), an entity independent of the Ministry of Railways. Although technically not categorised as a train accident, an independent inquiry – whether by the CRS or another external agency – would have demonstrated the Railways's commitment to transparency. Yet, as it stands, the Railways is both the accused and the judge.

The heart of the issue runs even deeper. Is there an ingrained malaise within the Railways, the supposed lifeline of the nation, that the more things should change, the more they stubbornly remain the same? Until the Railways confronts its own systemic inertia, tragedies such as these will continue to be written off as unfortunate inevitabilities rather than preventable failures.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NEP, language row

Apprehensions about the language issue in the New Education Policy must be sincerely addressed. India's diverse cultural identities should not be marred by any of the hegemonic policies imposed by the Centre. We have already seen that it is this issue that has caused much strife in the past. The success of the three-language formula will depend on resources being made available to teachers. Authentic translation of good books from one language to others must be encouraged to inculcate student interest in literature and diversity. Job scenarios must also be done in such a way that people have links with their regional language.

Brij B. Goyal,
Ludhiana, Punjab

CAG report

The Aam Aadmi Party has already experienced a major setback in the Delhi Assembly election. The CAG's report only adds insult to injury and may dim the prospects of the party in the long run ("Delhi lost ₹2,000 crore due to excise policy: CAG", February 26). With corruption charges against party bigwigs, the party seems to have lost its founding mojo — an anti-corruption USP. Yet, all is not lost. The party ought to revisit its policies and can stage a turnaround provided it starts working on its founding principles.

Aanya Singhal,
Noida, Uttar Pradesh

Delhi court verdict

If one ever needed proof for the saying 'justice delayed is justice denied', he does not need to look beyond the verdict in the Sajjan Kumar case ("Sajjan Kumar gets life term in 1984 riot case", February 26). Yes, the long arm of the law has shown that even the high and mighty can face justice. But four decades is way too long a period for it to be considered that justice has been delivered. It will not provide much solace to the families of the victims.

Bal Govind,
Noida, Uttar Pradesh

The German result

The devastating fall for Germany's Social Democratic Party, unprecedented results for the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the win for the Friedrich Merz-led alliance are a lesson for the rest of Europe. The European Union's attachment with human rights and asylum is wreaking havoc on mainstream politics. The Afd has emerged as a force and may well secure victory the next time.

Rahul Chouhan,
Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

A message to district magistrates and the police

R.K. Vij
Former Indian Police Service officer

Recently, two First Information Reports (FIRs) were registered under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) in Indore for violating the District Magistrate's prohibitory orders issued under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). These Sections correspond to Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), respectively. In a bid to make Indore free of beggars, the district administration had issued prohibitory orders on January 2, 2025. One FIR was registered against the person who gave alms to a beggar and the second was registered against a woman beggar's son who had taken responsibility for preventing her from begging but she was found begging anyway. Both FIRs were filed on the complaint of the Begging Eradication Squad officer.

Registering an FIR

However well-meaning the intentions of the district administration to make the city beggar-free may be, an FIR cannot be registered for the violation of orders issued under Section 163 of the BNSS. A District Magistrate may issue an order under this Section only in "urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger when there is sufficient ground for proceeding and immediate prevention or speedy remedy is desirable". The competent executive magistrate under such circumstances may direct any person to abstain from a certain act and may issue orders to "prevent obstruction, annoyance, or injury to any person lawfully employed, or danger to human life, health or safety, or a disturbance of the public tranquillity, or a riot, or an affray". Begging in public may cause annoyance or a disturbance to public tranquillity, but it cannot be considered an urgent case of nuisance or apprehended danger.

Even if such an order could be defended, an FIR cannot be registered for the violation. Section 215 of the BNSS (Section 195 of the CrPC) bars such action by the police. Section 215(1)(a) of BNSS says "no Court shall take cognisance (i) of any offence punishable under Sections 206 to 223 (both inclusive but excluding section 209) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023..., except on the complaint in writing of the public servant concerned or of some other public servant to whom he is administratively subordinate or of some other public servant who is authorised by the concerned public servant so to do". Therefore, despite the offence under Section 223 of the BNS being a cognisable one, the District Magistrate would have to approach the Court in writing to lodge a complaint. The police report is barred and therefore, no FIR can be registered.

The Supreme Court held in a case that "Section 195 of the CrPC is in fact a limitation on the unfettered powers of a (judicial) magistrate to take cognisance under Section 190" and he must determine "whether his power of taking cognisance has or has not been taken away by any provision of Section 195(1)". Charge-sheet on a cognisable offence is not a complaint, it is a police report.

In *C. Muniappan and others v. State of Tamil Nadu* (2010), the Supreme Court held that the provisions of Section 195 of the CrPC are mandatory and non-compliance of the same would vitiate the prosecution. In *State of U.P. v. Mata Bhikh and Others* (1994), the Supreme Court held that "the object of this section is to protect persons from being vexatiously prosecuted upon inadequate materials or insufficient grounds by person actuated by malice or ill-will or frivolity of disposition at the instance of private individuals for the offences specified therein". The Madras High Court in *Jeevanandham and Others v. State and Another* (2018) held that a police officer cannot register an FIR for any of the offences falling under Section 172 to 188 of the IPC (Section 206 to 223 of the BNS). However, the Court observed that a police officer by virtue of powers conferred under Section 41 of CrPC (Section 35 of the BNSS) will have the authority to take action when a cognisable offence under Section 188 of the IPC is committed in his presence or where such action is required, to prevent such person from committing an offence under Section 188 of IPC.

Even the principles laid down in *Lalita Kumari v. Government of Uttar Pradesh and Others* (2014) will not apply to registration of FIR for offence under Section 223 of the BNS. In a more recent case, the High Court of Chhattisgarh quashed the FIR registered by the police as a medical graduate had failed to inform the Chief Medical Officer during the COVID-19 pandemic on her arrival in Rajnandgaon, as required by the District Magistrate's order dated May 2020. An FIR was registered under Section 188 IPC by the Rajnandgaon police on a complaint by the local Chief Municipal Officer. The High Court quashed the FIR and held that no FIR could be registered for offence under Section 188 of the IPC.

Close the cases

The apropos line of action for the Indore police will therefore be to close the cases and intimate the District Magistrate accordingly. In case the District Magistrate wishes to proceed further, he may approach the court in writing as required under Section 215 of the BNSS. Though the State government could either initiate state amendment in the BNSS to loosen the fetters of Section 215(1) BNSS or enact a local law making begging a cognisable offence, it would not be advisable to convert a petty civil offence into a criminal one. This might deter people from giving alms, but punishing the receiver of alms will make the situation worse. Beggars need to be rehabilitated, not prosecuted.

An FIR cannot be registered under Section 223 of the BNS for the violation of DM's orders under Section 163 of the BNSS

The impact of ethanol on the environment

Scientists should not be dismissed for raising concerns about ethanol factories

STATE OF PLAY

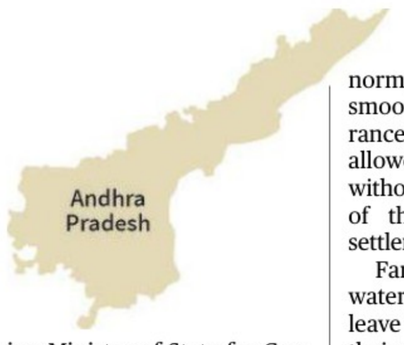
Nellore Sravani
sravani.n@thehindu.co.in

Concerns about the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme refuse to die down in Andhra Pradesh, with scientists and farmers saying water resources are depleting and emissions from factories are polluting the air, water, and soil.

Buoyed by the encouraging results of the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme, which was introduced in India as a pilot project in 2001, the Central government in 2020 decided to advance the target of 20% ethanol blending in petrol from 2030 to 2025 as the way towards a greener future. The EBP programme was said to be the way of addressing multiple concerns – of growing energy consumption, oil imports, and increasing carbon emissions from vehicles. Under the EBP, ethanol is made using grains, such as broken rice and corn, and is therefore said to double farmers' income as well.

As of 2024, the blend percentage was 15% in the country. To meet the required target of 20% ethanol in petrol by 2025-26, 1,016 crore litres of ethanol would be required. The Centre announced relaxations in the application processes for environmental clearance and also offered subsidies on purchase of grains to ensure a smoother process for ethanol factories.

Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana and Punjab have the highest number of ethanol factories in the country, contributing a substantial portion to the overall production capacity of 947 crore litres in 2022, as per information provided by former Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti, to the Lok Sabha.



Since 2024, there have been continuous protests at the Gummaladoddi, Gandepalli, Arugolanu villages in Andhra Pradesh against the EBP programme. All the three villages are located near a river or a canal, which is the source of drinking water and agricultural needs. Lokayukta officials had also said officials of the Pollution Control Board had failed to take action in 2022 against a factory producing ethanol since 2008 in Gandepalli despite knowing that effluents were being discharged into a nearby canal, which is used by farmers for agricultural purposes.

Much of the confusion regarding how polluting an ethanol plant can be arises from the fact that environmental clearances do not mention emissions to begin with. Experts say that hazardous, cancer-causing chemicals such as acetaldehyde, formaldehyde, and acrolein are some of the emissions from ethanol factories, but these don't find a mention in the clearances given to the ethanol factories in the East Godavari, Krishna and NTR districts in the State, as per environmentalists.

All ethanol production plants and distilleries fall under the 'red category', which means that they have a pollution score of 60 or more, as per Central government norms. But to facilitate a smoother and quicker clearance process, the Centre has allowed them to be set up without public hearings. Many of them are near human settlements.

Farmers also fear that the water-guzzling factories will leave them with no water for their crops. Their fears are not unfounded. Scientists for People, a collective of scientists based in Hyderabad, argue that a grain-based ethanol factory requires 8-12 litres of water per litre of ethanol. With the flow in perennial rivers such as the Krishna being lean for most of the year, factories located near these rivers depend on groundwater, which is a contravention of the rules.

A Niti Aayog report states that when petrol was blended with 20% of the biofuel, carbon monoxide reduced by 30% in four wheelers and 50% in two wheelers. While this may be true, scientists and environmentalists ask of what use the EBP programme is if the gains achieved are negated by the harmful chemicals released into the atmosphere during the process. On the one hand, environmentalists say the processes involved in the making of biofuel make it more harmful for the environment. On the other, industrialists say many factories cannot afford pollution control measures because of rising production and labour costs.

Without dismissing environmentalists for being "anti-development", the governments would do well to listen to their concerns and adopt corrective measures. After all, their collective goal remains the same – to work towards a greener future. This cannot come at the cost of agriculture, health, and the riparian rights of the people.

Over 70% farmers still use cash to sell their produce

The share of farmers using electronic payments for agriculture-related transactions rose from 8% in 2019 to 18% in 2024

DATA POINT

Nitika Francis
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

More than 70% of Indian farmers still rely on cash to sell their produce, show data from a survey published by the Reserve Bank of India. This share has increased only slightly since the pre-COVID-19 years, despite the pandemic boosting digital payments in other sectors of the economy.

Data also show that a significant number of farmers still rely on word-of-mouth from traders and fellow farmers to discover market prices for their produce, rather than using websites or apps. This share has remained the same when compared with the pre-pandemic years.

Chart 1 shows the share of farmers, traders, and retailers using various modes of payment for agricultural transactions in 2019, 2022, and 2024. In 2019, a year before the pandemic, 88% of farmers used cash for transactions. This share declined to 79% in 2022 during the second COVID-19 wave and further dropped to 72% in 2024 post-pandemic. Meanwhile, the share of farmers using electronic payments rose from 8% in 2019 to 14% in 2022 and 18% in 2024.

While the increase in electronic payments among farmers was gradual, it was much sharper among traders and retailers. The share of traders using electronic payments for agricultural transactions grew from 8% in 2019 to 28% in 2022 and 31% in 2024. Among retailers, this share grew from 3% in 2019 to 15% in 2022 and 22% in 2024.

Chart 2 shows the share of farmers using various sources of information about the market prices of produce in 2024. Close to 55% of the farmers said that they source their information from traders in 2024, a slight increase from about 47% in 2019. In 2024, about 47% of the farmers sourced their information from fellow farmers, a slight decrease from close to 51% in 2019.

However, the share of farmers sourcing information on prices from apps and websites has seen little change. In 2019, fewer than 10% of farmers relied on these digital sources for information on market prices. By 2024, this share grew a little up to 10%.

Charts 1 and 2 put together clearly show that in terms of business transactions and information management, a large section of farmers have remained insulated from digital practices.

The survey also shows the impact of climate change on agriculture. Close to 64% of farmers said they had experienced crop damage during the 2023-24 rabi season, with unseasonal rainfall being the reason for it, according to a majority (37%) of them. Heatwaves, which are closely associated with climate change, were the reason for crop damage, according to about 30% of the farmers. **Chart 3** shows the surveyed farmers' reasoning for crop damage during the 2023-24 rabi season.

Given the significant impact of climate change on agriculture, weather forecasts are cited as the primary factor influencing farmers' crop-sowing decisions **(Chart 4)**. Nearly 90% of farmers identified weather forecasts as the major factor, followed by irrigation availability at a distant second (less than 60%) and the expected price of produce at a distant third (less than 40%).

Chart 5 illustrates the farmers' share in the final retail price of select products in 2024. Since a significant portion of wheat is procured by the government, farmers receive 67% of its retail selling price. Farmers selling lentils (masoor) and chana (gram) also get over 60% of the retail price. In contrast, the share is lowest for perishable goods, with farmers receiving only about 40% of the retail price for potatoes, mangoes, and cauliflower.

Cash is still **king**

The data for the charts were sourced from a report released by the Reserve Bank of India titled, "Dynamics of Agriculture Supply Chain: Insights from Pan India Survey during Rabi Marketing Season" by *Rajib Das, Rishabh Kumar, Monika Sethi, Love Kumar Shandilya and Alice Sebastian*

Chart 1: The chart shows the share of farmers, traders, and retailers using various modes of payment in 2019, 2022 and 2024. Figures in %

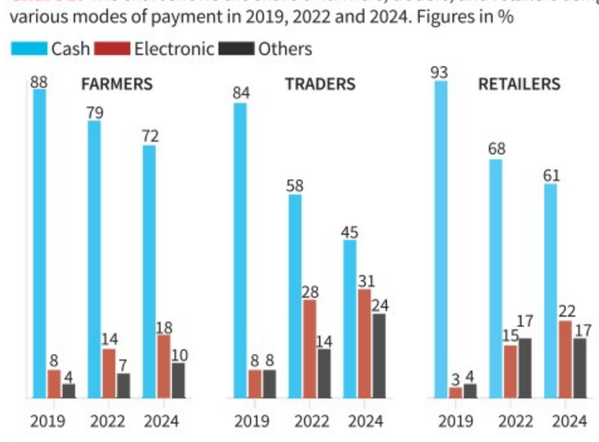


Chart 2: The share of farmers using various sources of information about market prices in 2024 (in %)

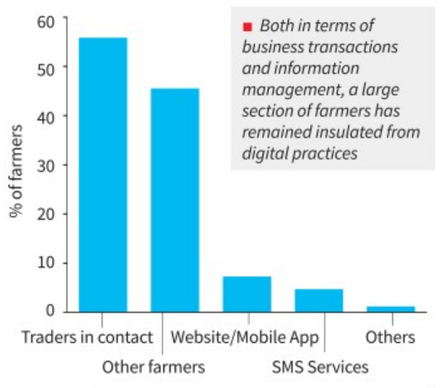


Chart 3: The surveyed farmers' reasoning for crop damage during the 2023-24 rabi season

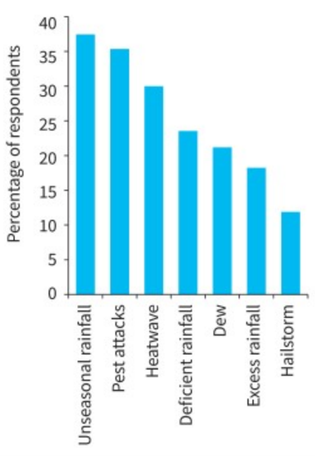


Chart 4: The surveyed farmers' reasoning for factors influencing their crop-sowing practices during the 2023-24 rabi season

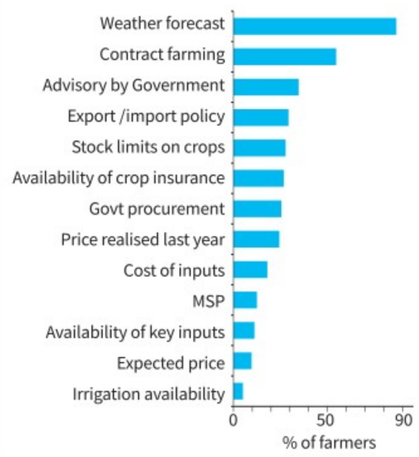
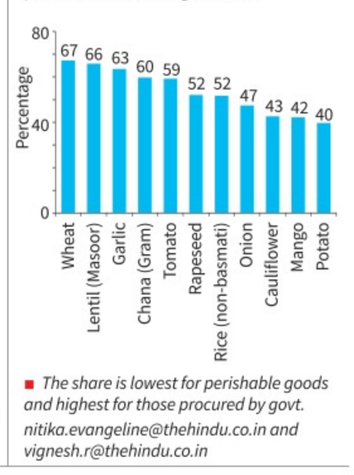


Chart 5: The chart shows the farmers' share in the final retail price of select products in 2024. Figures in %



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FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 27, 1975

China 'ready for talks' with India

Calcutta, Feb. 26: China's Vice-Premier Chen Hsilien said to-day that his Government "is ready for talks" – if desired by the Government of India – for normalisation of relations between the two countries.

He was speaking to newsmen during a brief halt at Calcutta airport on his way back home from Kathmandu after attending the coronation of the King of Nepal.

Asked about restoration of normal diplomatic relations between India and China, the Vice-Premier said, "It is for the Government of India to consider easing the diplomatic relations with China."

When a correspondent asked whether China thought that India's close relations with the Soviet Union stood in the way of improving Sino-Indian ties, he replied "not necessarily."

The Vice-Premier was asked whether China was ready for talks with India if the latter wanted it for normalisation of relations. He replied, "Yes, we are ready for talks."

When a correspondent observed that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had written to Chiarman Mao Tsetung but no reply had been received, he said. "One day India and China will have friendly relations."

West Bengal Finance Minister Shankar Ghosh, who received the Chinese Vice-Premier at the airport, intervened and said "we hope your visit to Calcutta this time will mark the beginning of friendly relations between the two countries."

"I hope so," the Vice-Premier reciprocated.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 27, 1925

English Association's proposal

London, Feb. 25: The English Lawn Tennis Association has announced that after consultation with the American Association and leading British players, the following wording of the footfault rule has been agreed upon and will be submitted to the International Federation: "Rule 6: Immediately before commencing service, the server shall stand both feet at rest behind the base line and within the imaginary continuation of the mark and sideline. Thereafter until service has been delivered, the server shall (a) not change the position, walking or running; (b) maintain contact with the ground; (c) keep both feet behind the base line."

From Page One

Delimitation won't cut LS seats in South: Shah

"Even if you follow the pro rata basis, it will reduce the numbers. If you follow the 1971 formula and increase the seats in other States on the basis of the existing constituencies, our seats should also be increased," he said.

"Is it not a punishment if the representation of a State which had progressed through welfare schemes and controlled population is reduced. The population of Tamil Nadu has come down. If population is followed for delimitation exercise, it will strangle the voice of the State," he said.

'Diverting public's attention'

Speaking at the Coimbatore event, Mr. Shah alleged that the law and order situation in Tamil Nadu was the worst in the country. Women are not safe in universities, he said, alleging that the drug mafia "had the blessings of the government" and illegal mining was rampant in the State. "The DMK leaders have a Master's degree in corruption," he alleged.

The Union Home Minister claimed that the DMK has selectively included corrupt individuals in its membership drive, with many of its leaders involved in various scams. The people of Tamil Nadu are frustrated with all of this, which is why the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and his son are raising other issues to divert the public's attention, he said. "In 2026, the NDA will come to power in Tamil Nadu. Time has come to end the 'anti-national' and 'anti-people' rule of the DMK in the State," he said.

Govt. questions pleas seeking lifetime ban

In its latest affidavit filed on February 24, the Centre reasoned that penal laws impose a restriction on freedoms and rights of persons only for a specific period, that is, the time of prison sentence. These restrictions cease to operate automatically. The Centre indicated that banning a person, who has served his time in jail for an offence, from contesting elections or re-entering politics for life would be unduly harsh, disproportionate and excessive.

"By confining the operation of the penalty to an appropriate length of time, deterrence is ensured while undue harshness is avoided... The petitions fail to make a crucial distinction between the basis of disqualification and the effects of disqualification. The basis of disqualification is conviction for an offence. But the basis of the disqualification becomes non-existent when the period of the conviction ends," the Union government countered in its affidavit.

Besides, the government said imposing a life ban would amount to rewriting Section 8 by replacing 'six years' with 'life-long'. The Supreme Court cannot legislate. That was entirely the domain of Parliament.

"A lifetime disqualification is the maximum that can be imposed under the provisions and to impose such a disqualification is certainly within the power of Parliament... It is trite law that courts cannot direct Parliament to make a law or to legislate in a particular way," the government affidavit noted.

Ukraine, U.S. agree on a basic deal on minerals

The agreement sets out the terms and conditions of an investment fund for the rebuilding of Ukraine, according to Mr. Shmyhal.

Ukraine needs to know first where the U.S. stands on its continued military support, Mr. Zelenskyy said.

Since returning to office last month, Mr. Trump let Ukraine know that he wanted something in return for tens of billions of dollars in U.S. help to fend off the invasion that Russia launched just over three years ago on February 24, 2022.

Mr. Zelenskyy said the main topics that he wants to discuss with Mr. Trump are whether the U.S. plans to halt military aid and, if so, whether Ukraine would be able to purchase weapons directly from the U.S. He also wants to know whether Ukraine can use frozen Russian assets for the purchase of weapons and investments and whether Washington plans to lift sanctions on Russia.

'Stalin trying to turn NEP into a campaign issue'

"I am also Minister for Skill Development, and the Tamil Nadu government-run Overseas Manpower Corporation Limited (OMCL) provides for free facilitation of learning languages like German and Italian to skilled personnel like nurses, for jobs abroad. Why then this resistance to Indian languages and specifically Hindi?" he asked.

"Why can't these good practices with regard to multi-lingualism be applied under NEP which is aimed at adoption of multiple languages?"

Mr. Chaudhary added that Mr. Stalin's statements were clearly aimed at raising political passions around the issue of language, given the way this debate has unfolded in the past. "The statements are clearly meant to raise a longer political campaign around language," he said. Assembly polls in Tamil Nadu are due in early 2026.

A whopping 1.4 crore people take holy dip on Sivaratri as Maha Kumbh draws to a close

Number of pilgrims surged past 66 crore during the 45-day event, says Uttar Pradesh govt.; fighter jets, transport planes, helicopters perform breathtaking manoeuvres in the sky over Prayagraj, where a 'no-vehicle zone' was in place in fair area

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Confluence of emotions: Flower petals being showered on the devotees gathered to take a holy bath at the Triveni Sangam on the occassion of Maha Sivaratri and the culmination of Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj on Wednesday. R.V. MOORTHY

Lakhs and lakhs of devotees streamed towards the Sangam, the confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati, on Wednesday for the final *snan* (bath) of the Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj on the occasion of Maha Sivaratri.

Over 1.44 crore people had taken the holy dip till 6 p.m. on the concluding day of the Maha Kumbh, as the overall footfall for the 45-day event surged past the 66-crore mark, the Uttar Pradesh government said.

The air resonated with chants of *Har Har Mahadev* as devotees began gathering near the various ghats in Prayagraj since midnight, waiting patiently to take the holy dip at the *Brahma Muhurta,* or the auspicious time. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath extended greetings to the devotees and monitored the arrangements from Gorakhpur along with senior government officials.

"Heartfelt greetings to all the revered sadhus, saints, kalpvasis, and devotees who have arrived today to take a dip of faith at the Triveni Sangam. May Lord Shiva, the ruler of the three worlds, and the sacred Mother Ganga bless everyone with well-being, this is my prayer. Har Har Mahadev," Mr. Adityanath said in a social media post on X.

"From January 13, when the Maha Kumbh began on Paush Purnima, till today on the occasion of Maha Sivaratri... in 45 days, more than 66 crore 21 lakh devotees have taken a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam. This is unprecedented in world history and truly unforgettable," he said in another post.

Devotees also thronged Siva temples in massive numbers across the State, including the Kashi Vishwanath temple, to offer prayers.

The district administration had enforced a "no-vehicle zone" in the fair area and Prayagraj, besides implementing strict crowd control measures to facilitate a seamless end of the grand event.

As devotees performed religious rituals, the Indian Air Force gave a fitting farewell to the Maha Kumbh, billed as the biggest religious congregation in the world, as Sukhoi fighter jets, AN-32 transport planes, and helicopters performed scintillating manoeuvres in the sky over Prayagraj.

Held every 12 years, the Maha Kumbh began on January 13. It witnessed six special bathing dates culminating with Maha Sivaratri (February 26).

ED conducts searches against visa consultants

Devesh K. Pandey
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has conducted searches on five business and residential premises in Chandigarh and Ludhiana, in connection with a case alleging fraudulent activities perpetrated by visa consultants.

The accused were involved in arranging forged documents to facilitate U.S. visas for the aspirants.

The premises are linked to Red Leaf Immigration Private Ltd., Overseas Partner Education Consultants, and Infowiz Software Solution, and others, the agency said on Wednesday.

The case is being investigated under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, based on the first information reports registered by the police in Delhi and Punjab.

"During the search operations, various incriminating documents, digital devices, and ₹19 lakh in cash were seized," the ED said.

The police cases were filed on a complaint from the Office of the Overseas Criminal Investigations, U.S. Embassy (Delhi) regarding alleged fraudulent activities perpetrated by the visa consultants.

The accused persons helped various visa applicants to show their eligibility for visa of the U.S. by manipulating various facts and circumstances.

Army vehicle fired upon in J&K's Rajouri; no casualties

The Hindu Bureau
JAMMU

An Army vehicle reportedly came under fire on Wednesday in the Sunderbani sector of Pir Panjal Valley of Rajouri district in Jammu and Kashmir. A search followed the suspected militant fire from a forest range.

Preliminary reports suggested that a brief incident of firing was reported at Phal village in Sunderbani sector of Nowshera. An Army vehicle was moving through the area. There were no reports of any casualty in the incident, which took place close to the Line of Control (LoC).

Communal violence flares up in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh over Maha Sivaratri celebrations

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Festival violence: A vehicle set on fire by miscreants after a violence broke out in Hazaribagh of Jharkhand on Wednesday. PTI

Several people were injured in a clash over decorations and placing of loudspeakers for Maha Sivaratri in Hazaribagh district of Jharkhand on Wednesday .

An altercation that began in the morning at Dumroan village in the Ichak police station area turned violent as each side threw stones at the other. Several shops and many vehicles were set on fire.

Those who sustained injuries were rushed to Hazaribagh Sadar Hospital.

On being alerted, the police rushed to the spot and used mild force to disperse the crowd.

According to the police, a group of Muslims protested against some persons fixing flags and installing sound systems at Hindustan Chowk. The arguments between the two communities quickly escalated into stone throwing.

Hazaribagh Deputy Commissioner Nancy Sahay said adequate forces had been deployed to maintain peace. "At present, the situation is under control and police are camping on the spot. Appropriate action will be taken and those responsible for the violence will be punished under the law," Ms. Sahay told presspersons.

BJP blames State govt.

BJP leader and Union Minister Sanjay Seth, who is the MP for Ranchi, alleged that the Hemant Soren government was responsible for the communal violence.

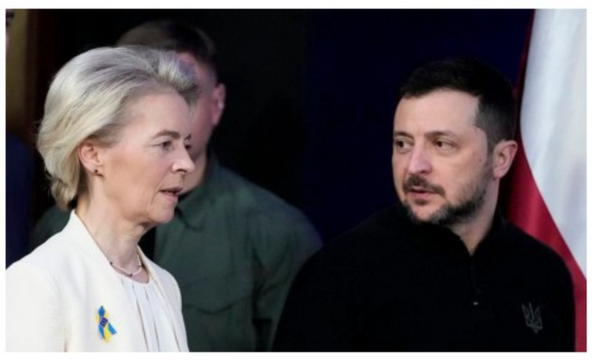
Reacting to the incident, Mr. Seth said: "This is condemnable and painful. The government should be strict with such people. Violence breaks out during idol immersion on Saraswati Puja, during Ram Navami, Holi, and Sivaratri."

He further said, "Such incidents happen in Jharkhand because Bangladeshi infiltrators are destroying the demography and law and order of the State. You see, wherever there is a BJP-NDA government, be it Delhi, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh – Bangladeshi infiltrators are identified and driven out."

Mr. Seth urged the Jharkhand Chief Minister to strengthen law and order by taking necessary action against Bangladeshi infiltrators. He alleged that the infiltrators were snatching away the rights of tribal people.

Trump's Russia-Ukraine policy hangs over EU-India talks

Suhasini Haidar
MADRID/NEW DELHI



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen along with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at a security summit. AP

Stung by the shifts in U.S. foreign policy, particularly on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the two-day visit by the President of the European Commission (EU), Ursula von der Leyen, and 21 EU Commissioners beginning Thursday will send the message that Europe is shoring up other partners, including India, as much as they focus on the task of resetting EU-India ties.

The College of Commissioners' travel is "unprecedented", a EU statement said, as they have never travelled to any country in such strength before. According to EU officials who briefed European and India media this week, the visit has been planned for some months, and was announced by Ms. von der Leyen at Davos on January 21. The policy changes wrought by U.S. President Donald Trump since then hang over the meetings in Delhi.

"A new push for greater cooperation, to be clear, was already identified and planned quite a while ago," an EU official said, adding: "But the timing of this visit is, of course, particularly interesting given the global developments that we are facing."

The European delegation comes just after the third anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which was marked by a moment of solidarity with the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and the presence of more than a dozen European and Western leaders, including Ms. von der Leyen, in Kyiv for commemorative ceremonies. The EU also imposed a 16th round of sanctions on Russia, even as the U.S. broke with it at the United Nations by voting with Russia against an EU resolution calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine.

Their meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and many members of the Union Cabinet will coincide with Mr. Zelenskyy's travel to Washington to sign a "mineral deal" and discuss a Russia-Ukraine ceasefire proposal with Mr. Trump, seen as a significant climbdown by the Ukrainian President, even after Mr. Trump called him a "dictator" with "4% approval ratings". The EU visit to Delhi will also come days before an extraordinary European summit on March 6.

"One specific point that I expect President Leyen to raise in the context of that conversation is not just our support for Ukraine, but also our sanctions that we are maintaining on Russia," the EU official said, indicating that despite the setback from the U.S.'s U-turn, the EU would continue "intensifying enforcement of its sanctions against Moscow".

New Delhi, which has rejected all sanctions against Russia thus far, and increased its oil imports from the Russian Ural multi-fold since 2022, is unlikely to change its position, especially in the revised circumstances.

The substance of the visit, then, will come from a restart in EU-India relations that have been somewhat cast in the shade over the Ukraine conflict. There has been no EU-India annual summit since 2020, although they held a 'Leader's Summit' in 2021, and are now preparing for a summit later in 2025.

Despite relaunching the long-pending EU-India Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) talks in 2022, the two sides have not made much headway over tariff issues on cars, wine and spirits, and on non-tariff barriers, officials conceded, and will hope for a political push during the Delhi visit ahead of the next round of trade talks on March 10-14 in Brussels.

The visit will begin with a meeting of the Trade and Technology Council (TTC), which is expected to work on aligning AI policies as well as cooperation on semiconductors, quantum computing, and green technology areas. This will be followed by bilateral meetings between EU Commissioners and Indian Ministers, a plenary with Mr. Modi, Ms. von der Leyen and their Cabinets, as well as meetings with key Indian industry leaders. The two sides are expected to hold broad discussions on updating the EU-India Strategic Roadmap (2020-2025), including cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

Months ahead of polls, seven BJP MLAs join Nitish Cabinet

Four are from OBC communities and one is from an EBC group; two are from the upper castes; BJP now has 21 Ministers; Janata Dal(U) holds 13 posts; the Cabinet has reached its maximum strength of 36 in the State with a 243-member House

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

In a long-expected expansion of the Nitish Kumar Cabinet, seven BJP legislators took oath as Ministers in Bihar on Wednesday, just months ahead of the Assembly election due in October-November.

Four of the new Ministers are from the Other Backward Classes: Krishna Kumar Mantu, Sanjay Saraogi, Sunil Kumar, and Motilal Prasad. Vijay Kumar Mandal is from the Extremely Backward Class (EBC) community. Raj Kumar Singh is a Rajput, and Jibesh Kumar is a Bhumihar, both upper caste communities.

"Since political parties will be plunging into the Assembly election campaign, caste consideration in the representation of Ministers in the Cabinet is an important ingredient in a State which is deftly casteridden," said Nawal Kishore Chaudhary, political commentator and former Patna University Professor. "Caste plays a calculus in elections among Hindi-heartland political parties."

New faces: Bihar Governor Arif Mohammed Khan being greeted by Sanjay Saraogi during the swearing-in of MLAs as Cabinet Ministers in Patna on Wednesday. PTI

Earlier in the day, BJP State president Dilip Kumar Jaiswal, who was the Minister for Revenue and Land Reforms, resigned from the Cabinet, saying, "In the BJP, we follow the principle of 'one man, one post', so accordingly, I have decided to step down from the post of Cabinet Minister."

On February 25, Mr. Kumar had a closed-door meeting with BJP president J.P. Nadda about the long-overdue expansion of the Cabinet, and the two leaders together finalised the names of the new entrants, sources said.

On Wednesday, BJP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary held a meeting of senior party leaders at his official residence in Patna before the new Ministers took oath at the Raj Bhavan at 4 p.m.

The Cabinet has now reached its maximum strength of 36 in a State with a 243-strong Assembly. The BJP has 21 Ministers, including two Deputy Chief Ministers, while the Janata Dal(U) holds 13 posts in the Cabinet. One Minister is from the Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular), a National Democratic Alliance partner led by Jitan Ram Manjhi, while the other is the Independent Sumit Kumar Singh.

Two Board exams aimed to provide a chance to improve performance: CBSE Chair

Maitri Porecha
NEW DELHI

On the draft proposal of conducting Board exams twice a year, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Chairperson Rahul Singh said on Wednesday that its salient feature is the continuance of the current scheme of examination while providing an opportunity to appear in a second examination in as many subjects as the student desires.

"This is aimed to provide another opportunity for students to improve their performance," Mr. Singh said. The draft policy for the conduct of two Board examinations in Class 10 has been issued by the CBSE as per the recommendations of the National Education Policy, 2020.

While the first phase of the exam is slated to be held from February 17 to March 6, the second phase will be from May 5 to 20.

'No change in subjects'

Mr. Singh's response comes after Punjab's Education Minister Harjot Bains asked why the Punjabi language was not being included in the draft policy.

The first phase of the Board exam is slated to be held from February 17 to March 6.

CBSE officials clarified that there was no change in subjects offered, and the list of languages published in the draft policy was indicative.

"Presently, the Board offers 16 academic subjects, 23 skill subjects, and 45 languages in Classes 9 and 10. Students may offer any two languages and three elective subjects from the list of academic subjects. In addition, students can also offer any skill subject as the sixth subject and one more language as the seventh subject. Accordingly, a student can offer a maximum of seven subjects in Class 10," he further said.

"This scheme of subjects and the choices shall remain unchanged for the 2026 Board examinations as well. Thus, the same set of academic subjects, languages, and skill subjects shall continue for the 2026 Board examinations," Mr. Singh added.

The candidates with special needs will also continue to avail themselves of the same facilities as extended presently. Similarly, any relaxation extended to any institution presently shall continue, the CBSE has further clarified.

"With the feedback received from stakeholders and the public, the scheme shall be further refined. Accordingly, all interested stakeholders are encouraged to furnish their feedback on the CBSE website within the schedule specified therein," Mr. Singh said.

SKM welcomes Punjab Assembly's resolution against govt.'s draft policy

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella organisation of farmers' unions, has welcomed the Punjab Assembly's resolution against the Centre's draft National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing (NPFAM), terming it a "qualitative feat to rally people against the corporate policies". At a press conference on Wednesday, SKM leaders urged other Assemblies to adopt similar resolutions against the draft policy.

The bold step taken by Punjab's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government and unanimously adopted by the State's Opposition parties as well has sent "a shockwave to multinational companies and big corporations", the SKM said. "Thus Punjab once again has demonstrated its determination to lead the people of the entire country against the corporate policies being imposed by the Narendra Modi-led BJP-NDA Government," it added.

The SKM has decided to campaign across the country against the NPFAM and the alleged corporate exploitation of farmers. FILE PHOTO

'Support, protect'

"As per the Constitution of India, agriculture is a State subject and the Union government should not trespass the State government's domain and dictate through such policy frameworks of unified national markets. However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is hell-bent on facilitating corporate takeover of agriculture production and marketing across India even by destroying the federal structure which is one of the cornerstones of the Constitution of India," the SKM said.

It appealed to the Chief Ministers of all States, including those led by the National Democratic Alliance, to reject the NPFAM draft and support the farmers in their struggle against corporatisation of agriculture, while protecting the federal rights of State governments.

The SKM has decided to campaign across the country against the NPFAM and the alleged corporate exploitation of farmers.

Public Accounts Committee should examine CAG report on AAP's excise policy, says Cong.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Welcoming the tabling of the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) report on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government's excise policy in the Delhi Assembly, the Congress on Wednesday said the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) should be constituted immediately to examine the audit report.

Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav and senior leader Sandeep Dikshit addressed a press conference at the All India Congress Committee office, in which they demanded a public discussion on the report, and a widening of its scope to examine the alleged involvement of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders as well.

"We want the CAG report to be investigated by the PAC. In such a situation, the PAC should be formed as soon as possible, so that this report can be investigated, and those who were involved in the loot should be punished," he said.

The Delhi Congress chief asserted that some important questions related to the role of some senior BJP leaders and the then Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) had been ignored in the CAG's report.

"Why and who took the decision to change three Excise Directors within one year? New brands of liquor were promoted in Delhi. This should be investigated. The then L-G had given permission to implement the liquor policy of the Kejriwal government. Why has no investigation been done on this till date?" he asked.

He noted that liquor shops could not be opened without the permission of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), and the BJP was ruling the MCD at the time.

"There is a need to investigate how licences were given to open liquor shops in violation of the master plan and in non-conforming areas," Mr. Yadav added.

Mr. Dikshit said the CAG report had revealed how the Delhi government, contrary to customer preferences, pushed for liquor brands whose distilleries were in Punjab. He also claimed that the audit report had pointed out how the objective of the liquor policy had been changed repeatedly.

Uddhav Sena sends notice of defamation to legislator

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena (UBT) has issued a defamation notice to Neelam Gorhe, Deputy Chairperson and Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Council, for making controversial remarks against party chief, Uddhav Thackeray in New Delhi on February 23.

The notice filed by Sushma Andhare said that Ms. Gorhe made claims that in the undivided Shiv Sena, key posts were allotted to people who gifted Mercedes cars to the party chief.

"The statements have caused harm to the reputation of the Shiv Sena (UBT) and its chief," the defamation letter read.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT & PANCHAYATI RAJ
(An Organisation of the Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India)
Rajendranagar, Hyderabad-500030

National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Govt. of India proposes to engage the services of suitable candidates for various positions on contract basis for providing support in implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA programme and to be placed at MGNREGS programme division of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi. Applications are invited from the interested candidates for the following contractual positions.

Sl. No.	Name of the Position	No. of Positions	Remuneration Per Month (Rs.)
1	Programme Officer - Works	1	1,90,000/-
2	Programme Officer (Timely payment, MIS and DBT)	1	1,90,000/-
3	Project Officer-Works (NRM/Convergence)	1	1,40,000/-
4	Project Officer (Research)	1	1,40,000/-
5	Project Officer (Legal)	1	1,40,000/-
6	Project Officer (IEC)	2	1,40,000/-
7	Project Officer (Planning and Monitoring)	2	1,40,000/-
8	Project Officer (Finance)	2	1,40,000/-
9	Project Officer Works (SECURE)	2	1,40,000/-
10	Project Officer (Timely payment, MIS and DBT) (UR:03; OBC:01)	4	1,40,000/-
11	Project officer (Capacity Building/CFP/Unnati/HR/ Public Grievance/Training) (UR:04; OBC:01)	5	1,40,000/-
12	Project Officer (Social Audit and Ombudsperson) (UR:04; OBC:01)	5	1,40,000/-
13	Junior Project Officer (Planning and Monitoring)	1	1,00,000/-
14	Junior Project Officer (IEC)	1	1,00,000/-
15	Junior Project Officer (Finance)	1	1,00,000/-
16	Junior Project Officer- Geo- MGNREGA/GIS	2	1,00,000/-
17	Junior Project Officer - Works	1	1,00,000/-

For Eligibility Criteria, Online submission of application and other details please visit: **http://career.nirdpr.in/**
Last date for submission of online application is **19.03.2025**
Advt No.08/2025
File No: NIRDPR/CWEL/Recruitmentof POsforMoRD/2025-26 Comp.no.17481
Sd/-
Assistant Director Administration (Section-I)

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
FISHERIES AND FISHERMEN WELFARE DEPARTMENT
FISHING HARBOUR PROJECT CIRCLE, CHENNAI - 600 035.
E-TENDER FOR CONTRACT: RATE TENDER SYSTEM - LUMP/SUM CONTRACT (TWO COVER SYSTEM)
E - Tender Notice No:13/DB/F.114N/2025, Dated : 25.02.2025
For and On behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, e-Tender is invited by the Chief Engineer, Fishing Harbour Project Circle, Fisheries and Fishermen Welfare Department, Chennai from the eligible Registered Contractors of Water Resources Department and Public Works Department **for the one work through online.**
1) Tender Documents available at website from 27.02.2025, 5.00 P.M. onwards to 02.04.2025, 05.00 P.M.
2) The Last date of submission of tender through online at 02.04.2025, 05.00 P.M.
3) Date and Time of Opening of the E-Tender 03.04.2025, 05.00 P.M.
The tender documents, Approximate value of work, EMD details, Period of contract, Eligibility of contractor and other details will be available through online in the Government website **https://tntenders.gov.in** and it can be downloaded at free of cost. For further details and in case of any Changes / Corrections / Amendments / Corrigendum in the tender / tender notice will be intimated in the above website only.
DIPR/745/Tender/2025
Chief Engineer,
Fishing Harbour Project Circle, Chennai - 600 035.

THE TIRUVANNAMALAI DISTRICT CO.OP.MILK PRODUCERS' UNION LTD
TSD-550, VENGIKKAL, TIRUVANNAMALAI -4.
NEW TENDER NOTICE
Two part tender is invited by Tiruvannamalai Co-operative Milk Producers' Union Ltd., Tiruvannamalai for 90 Milk Collection Route Vehicles and 2 no's of Taxi For Milk Procurement & Input activities for 2 years for 2025-2027 as detailed below.

01	Starting Date & Time for availability of Tender Form(Through Online)	27.02.2025 - 10.00 A.M onwards
02	Last Date & Time for availability of Tender Form (Through Online)	19.03.2025 upto 10.00 A.M
03	Last Date & Time For receipt of filled in Tender Form(Through Online)	19.03.2025 upto 10.00 A.M
04	Place, Date & Time of Opening (Through Online) Part. I Technical Bid)	General Manager - Office, Tiruvannamalai - 4. 19.03.2025 at 03.00 P.M.
05	The Cost of Tender for Rs.0.00/-(Through Online Free), EMD, Tender Conditions and other details can be seen in the tender documents or it can be downloaded through **www.tenders.tn.gov.in**	

Place: Tiruvannamalai - 4.
Date: 27.02.2025
DIPR/ 760 /TENDER/2025
General Manager
Tiruvannamalai District Co.Op.Milk Producers' Union Ltd

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU
HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT
Tiruvannamalai Highways (Construction & Maintenance) Circle
TENDER NOTICE
Tender Notice No.29/2024-2025/HDO/Dated:25.02.2025
For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, **Schedule tender in Two Cover System pertaining to Tiruvannamalai (H) C&M Division** through online only will be received **upto 09.04.2025 / 12.00 hours** by the **Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Tiruvannamalai Circle** for **CRIDP 2024-25 (1 Work).**
Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available **from 05.03.2025** onwards in the Government website **https://tntenders.gov.in.** If any Changes/ Corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.
DIPR/781/TENDER/2025
SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (H), C&M CIRCLE, TIRUVANNAMALAI

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU
HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT
TIRUCHIRAPPALLI
CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE CIRCLE
TENDER NOTICE
Tender Notice No.55/2024-2025/HDO/Dated:25.02.2025
For and on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu, Percentage tender through online will be received **up to 17.03.2025, 14.00 hours** (Server Time) by the Superintending Engineer (H) C&M Tiruchirappalli Circle, Tiruchirappalli-20, for **CRIDP 2024-2025 Scheme, One Work** pertaining to **Thiruvarur (H) C&M Division.**
Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available **from 28.02.2025** onwards in the Government website **https://tntenders.gov.in.** If any changes/ Corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.
DIPR/757/TENDER/2025
SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (H), C&M CIRCLE, TIRUCHIRAPPALLI -20.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT
Chennai Construction and Maintenance Circle
TENDER NOTICE
Tender Notice No.44/2024-2025/HDO/Dated : 25.02.2025
For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, **Percentage tender through online only** are invited upto **18.03.2025** at **01.00 PM** by the Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Chennai Circle under **CRIDP 2024-2025,** work pertaining to Thiruvallur (H) C&M Division.
Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details will be available from **28.02.2025** onwards in the Government website **https://tntenders.gov.in**. If any Changes/Corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.
DIPR/ 747 /TENDER/2025
Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Chennai Circle.

INBRIEF

'Will hold joint protest if govt. implements Labour Codes'

The national conference of the All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU), a central trade union supported by the CPI (ML-Liberation) has resolved to hold joint protests with other trade unions if the Centre implements the four Labour Codes. A resolution adopted at the meeting said the Narendra Modi government has renewed its onslaught on workers' rights by attempting to implement the "anti-worker four Labour Codes through the backdoor". The AICCTU said it is resolved to fight against the implementation of the four Labour Codes, until it is withdrawn.

DRDO, Navy conduct flight test trials of anti-ship missile

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Navy carried out successful flight trials of a naval anti-ship missile from the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur. The trials, carried out on Tuesday, demonstrated the missile's capability against ship targets when launched from a helicopter. "The trials have proven the missile's man-in-loop feature and scored a direct hit on a small ship target in sea-skimming mode at its maximum range. The missile uses an indigenous imaging infra-red seeker for terminal guidance," the DRDO said in a statement on Wednesday. The feature allows a pilot to retarget the missile mid-flight.

Panel seeks penalties to end proxy rule by male kin of women panchayat leaders

Without detailing the 'exemplary penalties', the panel has recommended a multi-pronged strategy involving policy intervention, structural reforms, technological solutions for better monitoring

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Speaker Om Birla with women representatives of Panchayati Raj institutions and Urban Bodies in New Delhi. FILE PHOTO

To tackle the challenge of proxy leadership by male relatives of women leading Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), a Union government-appointed advisory committee has recommended "exemplary penalties".

In September 2023, on the directions of the Supreme Court, the Panchayati Raj Ministry had constituted the advisory committee to examine the issue of "women pradhans being represented by the male members of their families".

Reservation of seats

The 73rd Constitutional (Amendment) Act, 1992 mandated reservation of one-third of the seats for women in panchayats. This quota was further expanded to nearly 50% by 21 States and two Union Territories. Currently, across the country, of the 32.29 lakh elected panchayat representatives, 46.6% are women. But in several parts of the country, women are reduced to figureheads with their male relatives taking the lead instead, defeating the very purpose of the reservation.

To discourage this trend, the committee has suggested a multi-pronged strategy involving policy intervention, structural reforms, technological solutions for better monitoring, peer support programmes, positive affirmations, and punitive action. Its recommendations include Kerala-style "gender-exclusive quotas" in some panchayat subject committees, and public swearing-in of "women pradhans" in the Gram Sabha federation of women panchayat leaders.

The panel has also recommended constructing a robust accountability and oversight mechanism in the form of "helplines" and "Women Watchdog Committees" for confidential complaints and "whistleblower rewards" in verified cases.

"Exemplary penalties should be enforced for proven cases of proxy leadership, deterring male relatives' interference," the panel has said, without elaborating on whether this penalty should be pecuniary or physical in form.

One of the suggestions that the committee secured from its field visits was that minimum school-level education should be made mandatory for contesting elections to the post of "panchayat president". Though the committee recorded this in its report, it's not part of the nine-point final recommendations. Education eligibility bar for positions in panchayats has been hotly contested.

The Haryana government had introduced a law setting a "minimum" education for eligibility to contest a panchayat election. For women, it was the completion of Class 8. The Supreme Court of India in December 2021 upheld the law against legal challenges. The panel has recorded that one of the suggestions it received was "minimum school-level education should be made mandatory for contesting elections for Panchayat President, irrespective of gender".

CBI trying to tarnish Abhishek Banerjee's reputation: lawyer

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

Abhishek Banerjee

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is building a politically motivated narrative in a blatant attempt to tarnish the reputation of Trinamool Congress leader Abhishek Banerjee, his lawyer Sanjay Basu said in a statement on Wednesday.

The development came after the CBI filed a supplementary chargesheet in the primary teachers recruitment scam before a court in Kolkata where the name of one Abhishek Banerjee surfaces.

"The CBI's politically motivated narrative is a blatant attempt to tarnish Abhishek Banerjee's reputation. By inserting unverified statements into a case concerning others, the agency has raised serious concerns about the fairness of its investigation," a statement issued by Mr. Basu's office said.

While the chargesheet does not disclose the identity of Abhishek Banerjee, the document adds, "It has further been revealed from the conversation that there was a rift between Abhishek Banerjee and accused Partha Chatterjee on the issue of illegal appointment". The chargesheet also alleges that Abhishek Banerjee "demanded ₹15 crore for the illegal appointment already done".

The chargesheet identifies Partha Chatterjee as a former State Education Minister and Sujay Krishna Bhadra, alias *Kalighater Kaku* (uncle from Kalighat), who has been identified as the "chief operating officer" of a company, Leaps and Bounds, and named as accused number one in the supplementary chargesheet. According to the agency, the name Abhishek Banerjee figures in an audio conversation recorded in 2017 by Aurobindo Roy Barman at the behest of Kuntal Ghosh, an accused in the scam at the residence of Sujay Krishna Bhadra, where Mr. Ghosh and others had visited for delivery of bribe amount.

Both Sujay Krishna Bhadra and Partha Chatterjee were arrested for their alleged involvement in the recruitment scam.

NAAC removes 900 peer assessors from evaluation duty after detecting irregularities

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The NAAC has put in place several committees that are reviewing irregularities, subject-wise and region-wise. FILE PHOTO

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has removed 900 peer assessors from evaluation duty. These assessors were responsible for evaluating higher education institutions in the course of grading the institutions.

While the review of the work and conduct of assessors has been going on for nearly 18 months, the recent NAAC-Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (KLEF) corruption case in Andhra Pradesh has speeded up the process. "Out of the 5,000 peer assessors we had onboarded for evaluation of higher education institutions, we had to remove 900 from duty. Over a period of one-and-a-half years, we have looked at various aspects like performance, feedback, variation in working protocols from multiple perspectives. There were some irregularities like travelling a day before the evaluation, providing incorrect information to us, going only to their choice of institutions and so on," Ganesan Kannabiran, Director, NAAC, told *The Hindu*.

The Central Bureau of Investigation recently launched an investigation into the alleged bribery of a NAAC team by the Guntur-based KLEF in exchange for an A++ rating for its university. In response, the seven peer assessors concerned were debarred by the agency.

Mr. Kannabiran said that the peer assessors under scrutiny were identified and checked for credibility based on reports and feedback. Post the recent CBI case, the NAAC has put in place multiple committees that are reviewing irregularities, subject-wise and region-wise, he added.

Fresh recruits

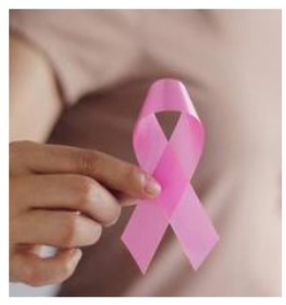
Along with the removal of the 900 peer assessors, the NAAC has also parallelly onboarded 1,000 new assessors over the last year in three rounds of recruitment. "We put together a committee of Vice-Chancellors and, based on their recommendations, we have onboarded 1,000 people," Mr. Kannabiran said.

Reiterating the importance of transparency and confidentiality in the process of evaluation and grading of higher education institutions, Mr. Kannabiran said, "What happened [in Andhra Pradesh] was a shock. But we have combated it with our decision to conduct online and hybrid evaluations now. Of course, this comes with its own challenges, but in the next two-and-a-half months, we can identify those challenges and train accordingly. The executive committee has decided that this approach is better since it has no integrity issues."

Reacting to the development, M. Jagadesh Kumar, Chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC), said the NAAC, an autonomous body under the UGC, has recently undertaken substantial reforms to enhance the integrity and transparency of its accreditation processes. "The UGC fully endorses NAAC's initiatives and compliments the council for its firm measures in enforcing reforms that strengthen the credibility and reliability of the accreditation framework," he said.

'Cancer-related mortalities increased faster among women in the past decade'

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI


The five most common cancers in India make up 44% of the country's cancer burden.

Approximately three out of every five individuals in India die following a cancer diagnosis. Additionally, cancer-related mortalities have increased faster among women (1.2%-4.4% annual percentage change) than men (1.2%-2.4%) over the past decade, and are expected to rise, found an analysis by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) based on figures presented by the Global Cancer Observatory (GLOBOCAN), 2022 estimates.

GLOBOCAN is an online database providing global cancer statistics and estimates of incidence and mortality in 185 countries for 36 types of cancer, and for all cancer sites combined. The analysis notes that in India, childhood and reproductive age group individuals bear the lowest risk of developing and dying (0.08%-1.3%) from cancer, compared with their middle-aged and geriatric counterparts.

"As the population of India transitions from the reproductive age group to the middle age and geriatric age group, India is anticipated to witness the highest cancer burden of all-time in near future, potentially exacerbated by the looming [cancer] epidemic," notes the paper.

It adds that the five most prevalent cancers affecting both genders collectively account for 44% of the cancer burden in India.

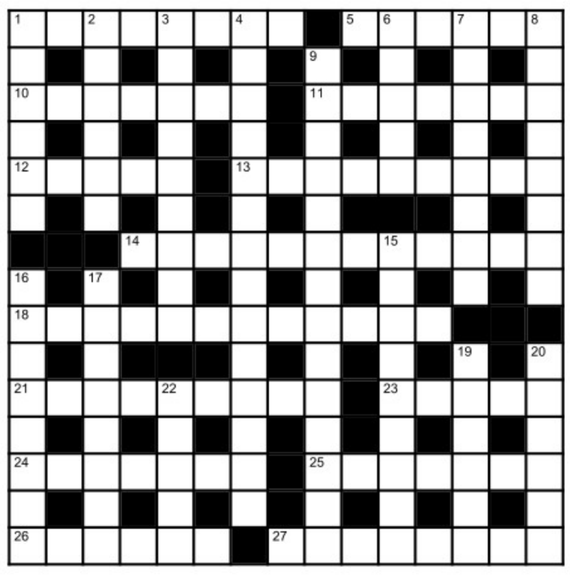
The country is currently indicating that females exhibit higher 'crude incidence' and 'crude mortality' rates, compared with males, based on the population of 0.676 billion females and 0.731 billion males in 2022. Crude rates are calculated by dividing the number of new cancers or cancer deaths observed during a given time period by the corresponding number of individuals in the population at risk.

TH CROSSWORD + 14419

(set by Dr. X)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Analysed patient finally - allergic to peanuts (8)
5 Brown bag contains Asian money (6)
10 Try dance moves to maintain figure (7)
11 Disregard info about the French model consuming cocaine (7)
12 Most love new ornament (5)
13 Fruit in a tin, green bananas (9)
14 Matter of girl involved in immorality with one's betrothed outside club (12)
18 What assassin will do to earn a large profit (4,1,7)
21 Punishes boys trapping cat in compound (9)
23 Entomb Italy's foremost sister after welcoming Rector (5)
24 Pomade from Rio used in shower (4,3)
25 Bull beginning to amble behind compound (7)
26 Came back with good, large electronic switch (6)
27 Troublemaker, say, carrying case of pills with Ecstasy (8)

Down

1 Vendor unwrapped large boxes (6)
2 Extremely tricky criminal squeezing old industrialist (6)
3 Criminal at Iran smuggling dope to South American country (9)
4 Fixed broken pole in ancient city (14)
6 Crook's scheme to get rid of wife (5)
7 Distressed painter taking drug, one relieving constipation (8)
8 Picked up gun and drove to arrest rogue finally (8)
9 Lone wolf! Ponies go berserk all at once (2,3,4,5)
15 Is princess able to go out with suitor? (9)
16 Principle of homotopy in applied maths is a huge, widespread success (5,3)
17 Heartily sloshed star outside bar is stripping (8)
19 Hold-up after United Kingdom backed Middle Eastern country (6)
20 Charm of European getting close to cuddle date (6)
22 Nordic monster beginning to throw rock (5)

SUDOKU

	8	5	4	9				
		3			5			
1				3				
8		1			7		3	9
	3		8		9		7	
7	4		5			8		1
				7				8
			3			9		
				2	8	3	4	

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

No.SS6443 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

Solution to previous puzzle

	S	H	O	W	E	R	C	U	R	T	A	I	N	
		E		A		E		N		A		N		
S	M	A	L	L		B	U	S	H	C	R	A	F	T
T		R		L		E		E		O		W		H
A	R	T	I	F	I	C	I	A	L		H	O	P	I
R		H		L				T		S		R		R
B	E	S	P	O	K	E		I	M	P	E	D	E	D
I				W		N		N		O				P
L	A	M	B	E	N	T		G	A	R	B	A	G	E
L		I		R		E				T		V		R
I	N	D	Y		P	R	E	P	O	S	S	E	S	S
N		T		I		T		A		W		N		O
G	R	E	E	N	S	A	N	D		E	G	G	O	N
		R		O		I		R		A		E		
	E	M	I	N	E	N	C	E	G	R	I	S	E	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

2	7	8	5	9	4	6	3	1
5	9	3	6	2	1	7	8	4
1	6	4	7	3	8	2	9	5
8	2	9	1	7	5	3	4	6
3	1	6	2	4	9	5	7	8
4	5	7	3	8	6	1	2	9
9	3	1	4	6	2	8	5	7
6	4	2	8	5	7	9	1	3
7	8	5	9	1	3	4	6	2

FAITH

Values from the Ramayana

A good civilisation hinges on discipline, pure thoughts, and good conduct, which are well described in the Ramayana. Saints have praised the epic as a life lesson on dharma. Sri Rama symbolises virtue as He never compromises with anything unethical while upholding the principles of justice. Rama possessed the power of mountain Meru, but in patience, He exhibited the quality of Mother Earth. Rama displayed great virtues like showing reverence to parents and pouring love and affection on brothers and friends.

Sri Damodhara Dikshitar said in a discourse that decisions should be made in a family setting, considering interests and welfare of all members.

Tara, Vaali's wife, cautioned him not to venture out for another round of fight with Sugreeva, who was not a fool to rechallenge him so soon after the punishment Vaali inflicted on him. But Vaali rejected her advice. Lying in a pool of blood with Rama's arrow piercing his heart, Vaali pleaded with Rama to save his son Angadha, who he liked the most.

Vaali told Rama to care for his son as he would care for his brothers and Sugreeva. But the most compassionate Rama said He would care for Angadha as Vaali himself would.

Sri Rama asked Vaali whether he needed a renewal of his life. Still, Vaali replied that it was tough for people to think of God on the deathbed. "As you appeared before me, I am fortunate to breathe last in your presence, and I don't need another life because I am not sure whether I would think of God at the end of that life."

EU says ready to address India's specific concerns on carbon tax levy on imports

Amiti Sen
NEW DELHI

The European Union has acknowledged India's "specific concerns" about implementing the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) – the bloc's tool to levy taxes on imports of certain carbon-intensive goods from early next year – and is ready to address them.

While some of the concerns may be "illegitimate", as the CBAM is a WTO-compatible measure, the EU is committed to addressing all worries and sharing its experience to help in the implementation, an EU official said.

"I think we know that the Indian side has had specific concerns on CBAM and on the effect that it may have. We are, of course, committed to addressing those concerns with parties around the world that may be affected by CBAM," the official said.

The EU is unlikely to include CBAM on the agenda for the talks between PM Narendra Modi and EU President Ursula von der Leyen on Friday in New Delhi, though India wants to bring it up, another source said. EU Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero, and Clean Growth, Wopke Hoekstra is reported to have said that they would exclude 90% of companies from CBAM.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

India singles out VW in $1.4-bn tax dispute, says Kia corrected course

VW, Indian authorities are in a legal tussle over record tax demand as govt. accuses automaker of using clandestine scheme to evade tax; case rekindles worries among foreign firms in India; it could cost VW $2.8 bn, including penalty, interest

Reuters
NEW DELHI

Indian tax authorities have singled out Volkswagen as the only automaker to wrongly classify its car imports for 12 years to evade $1.4 billion in taxes, even as rival Kia changed its practice after being pulled up, court papers show.

Volkswagen is a tiny player in India's car market, which is the third biggest in the world, and its Audi brand lags luxury peers such as Mercedes and BMW. If found guilty it could face dues of $2.8 billion, including penalty and delayed interest.

The court fight over the record tax demand is a matter of "life and death", Volkswagen's Indian unit says. The highest import tax demand in India's history has also rekindled investor worries that lengthy disputes could stymie their plans. India says Volkswagen used a clandestine scheme to import auto parts in separate shipments, to evade detection and cut taxes, instead of declaring items as "completely knocked down", or CKD, units that face higher taxes of 30% to 35%.

Rebutting Volkswagen's court plea, tax authorities listed 10 carmakers, from Mercedes-Benz to BMW and Hyundai, that correctly classified their imports, despite using "split consignments" to bring in parts.

South Korea's Kia fell in line after being warned, the authorities said in their 506-page filing, which is not public, but was seen by *Reuters*. "Earlier, they were clearing such imports as parts, against which investigation was undertaken," the authorities told the court about the altered practice at Kia, which continues to fight a demand for $155 million in tax.

"Post the investigation, they have started classifying such imports correctly."

This month *Reuters* reported Kia was contesting a $155-million tax demand from 2024 for the similar import, in separate shipments, of parts for its Carnival luxury minivan. Kia says it is reviewing the matter and cooperating with authorities.

A senior Indian tax official, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed Kia had "accepted misclassification" and corrected its process, but cites a lengthy investigation period as justification for contesting the tax demand.

Volkswagen's domestic unit, Skoda Auto Volkswagen, Kia and India's tax department did not respond to queries from *Reuters*.

Hitting the tax hurdle

Volkswagen's Indian subsidiary, Skoda Auto Volkswagen India, imported car parts over a 12-year period, from 2012 to 2024

Sep. 2024: Tax authorities issue a $1.4 billion tax demand to Volkswagen, alleging misclassification of imports to evade higher duties

Jan. 29, 2025: Volkswagen approaches Bombay HC against the tax demand, says it contradicts India's import taxation rules

Feb. 5: Bombay HC begins hearing Volkswagen's case

Feb. 17: Carmaker's lawyers argue that complying with the tax demand would jeopardise its India operations

Feb. 20: Customs Dept asserts in court that Volkswagen must comply, emphasises uniform application of the law

File affidavit on time limitation: HC to Customs

After an extensive hearing of arguments in the $1.4 billion tax dispute case involving Skoda Auto Volkswagen India, the Bombay High Court on Wednesday directed the Customs department to file an affidavit explaining how its September 2024 show-cause notice to the auto maker is not barred by limitation.

PSBs drive infra bond boom

K. Ram Kumar
MUMBAI

Banks mopped up 75% more resources via infrastructure bond issuances in the current financial year so far, amid deposit growth lagging credit growth and the cost of funding via this route being as competitive as term deposits.

They collectively raised ₹89,588 crore via infrastructure (infra) bond issuances in the first 11 months of the current financial year against ₹51,081 crore in the year-ago period.

Public sector banks (PSBs) accounted for 90% of the total infra bond issuances in the aforementioned period against 51% in the year-ago period. Private sector banks accounted for the rest.

While infra bond issuances witnessed a sharp uptick, tier-2 and additional tier (AT)-1 bonds issuances by banks declined.

Tier-2 bond issuances were lower at ₹33,100 crore (₹34,329 crore).

AT-1 bond issuances more than halved to ₹8,000 crore (₹17,516 crore).

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

SpiceJet reports ₹26 cr. Q3 net profit

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

SpiceJet reported net profit of ₹26 crore in the quarter ended December 2024 against a loss of ₹300 crore in the year-ago period.

The airline said it settled multiple outstanding disputes with aircraft and engine lessors, amounting to ₹1,700 crore after paying ₹1,233 crore.

The company's independent auditors noted that the airline's accumulated losses amounted to ₹8,109 crore and the current liabilities exceeded the current assets by ₹3,871 crore.

Demand for compact luxury homes rising in Mumbai's Dadar

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Though COVID-19 might have created a demand for larger homes, the micro market of Dadar, the central Mumbai bastion of Maharashtrians known for the iconic Shivaji Park, is witnessing rising demand for compact luxury homes in the price range of ₹2.5-₹5 crore, according to real estate developers.

With local residents and a growing segment of young professionals, MSME owners, affluent and nuclear families seeking compact yet luxurious homes, areas like Dadar, Shivaji Park, Old Cadel Road and even adjoining Prabhadevi have seen a spate of construction activities, mostly redevelopment.

Apartments worth ₹2.5-₹5 crore are seeing a spurt in demand, say realtors. (Picture for representational purpose)

'Affordable' units

According to developers, smaller units, mostly two BHKs are popular as they are 'affordable' compared with Worli and enjoy greater resale value apart from a host of advantages.

Dadar and Shivaji Park areas are preferred as the locations offer a rare combination of luxury and accessibility, making these an ideal choice for buyers looking to upgrade lifestyle with a home in Central Mumbai, developers said.

"The demand for one and two BHK luxurious residences in prime locations of Dadar is on the rise and considering the luxury element, we have introduced Dadar's first development which boasts Mumbai's only one and two BHK residences with a 10.5 feet floor-to-floor height as against the normal 9.5 feet, creating a luxurious living experience," Priyanka Jindal Gupta, advisor, Viyaara Realty said.

Anand Gupta, vice-president, Builders Association of India (BAI) said he had seen this trend emerging in the Dadar west locality as people were preferring to move into slightly bigger but compact luxury homes. "Sales in this locality is good and many developers have successfully completed projects and many are ongoing."

According to him, prices range between ₹55,000 and ₹65,000 per sq. ft. in Dadar compared with ₹1 lakh per sq. ft. in nearby Worli. "This is giving a boost to redevelopment in Dadar locality," he said.

"Considered strategic locations Shivaji Park in Dadar remains one of the most sought-after locations in Mumbai, known for high resale value, seamless connectivity, and vibrant social infrastructure," said Manoj Paliwal, director, Viyaara Realty. With major infrastructure projects reshaping Mumbai's landscape, Dadar has become the city's main transport hub, said Mohit Ramsinghani, a property expert.

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION
6th, 7th, & 8th Floor, Tower-B, World Trade Centre, Nauroji Nagar, New Delhi-110029
Tel: 2618 9709
सत्यमेव जयते

Petition No. 61/TL/2025 Dated: 24.2.2025

NOTICE UNDER CLAUSE (a) OF SUB-SECTION (5) OF SECTION 15 OFTHE ELECTRICITY ACT, 2003

An application under Section 14of the Electricity Act, 2003 (the Act) has been made by Khavda IVA Power Transmission Limited, C-105, Anand Niketan, New Delhi-110021 for the grant of a separate Transmission Licence for "Augmentation of transformation capacity at KPS3 (GIS) S/s under Khavda Phase- V Part B3" on the RTM route (hereinafter referred to as the 'transmission scheme/project'). The scope of the project for which a transmission licence has been sought is as follows:

S. No.	Name of the scheme and Implementation timeframe	Estimated Cost (₹ crores)	Remark
1.	Augmentation of transformation capacity at KPS3 (GIS) S/s under Khavda Phase-V Part B3 Scheme Tentative Implementation timeframe: 24 months	252	Approved to be implemented under RTM by Khavda IV A Power Transmission Limited

Detailed scope of the Scheme is as under:

S. No.	Scope of the Transmission Scheme	Capacity/ km
1.	Augmentation of transformation capacity at KPS3(GIS) by 1x1500 MVA, 765/400 kV ICT on Bus section-II (8th) along with 1 No. 400 kV line bay for termination of 1stckt out of 400 kV D/c line being implemented by AGEL (Appl. No. 2200000953) for 1530 MW	• 765/400 kV ICT- 1 (1x1500 MVA) • 765 kV ICT bay- 1 (+1 no. bay for dia completion with Switchable Line Reactor (SLR) provision in future bay) on Bus section-II • 400 kV ICT bay- 1 (+ 1 no. bay for dia completion and termination of the proposed Line for RE interconnection) on Bus section-II
2.	1 Nos. 400 kV line bay on KPS3 400 kV Bus Section-II for termination of 2ndckt out of 400 kV D/c line being implemented by AGEL (Appl. No. 2200000953) for 1530 MW	400 kV line bays- 1 no. (+ 1 no. bay for dia completion with the provision to terminate future 400/220 kV ICT)

Note: *TSP of KPS3 (GIS) shall provide space for above scope of work.*

2. The Central Transmission Utility of India Limited, vide its letter dated 12.12.2024, has recommended for the grant of a transmission licence to the applicant to establish the proposed transmission system.
3. Based on the material available on the record, the Commission vide order dated 21.2.2025 in Petition No. 61/TL/2025, has proposed to issue a transmission licence to the applicant for establishment of the transmission scheme as noted in para 1 above.
4. A copy of the application, along with its annexures and enclosures, made by the applicant for the grant of an inter-State transmission licence to **Khavda IVA Power Transmission Limited** before the Commission can be accessed at the **www.adanienergysolutions.com** or inspected by any person in the Commission's office by following the laid down procedure.
5. Notice is hereby given in pursuance of clause (a) of sub-section (5) of Section 15 of the Act that suggestions or objections, if any, to the Commission's proposal to grant a transmission licence to the applicant, as aforesaid, be sent to the undersigned by **7.3.2025** at the above noted address. The suggestions or objections received after the specified date shall not be considered.
6. The application shall be taken up for the further hearing by the Commission on **11.3.2025.** Any person who files suggestions or objections may in his/her discretion attend the hearing, for which no TA/DA shall be paid by the Commission.

Sd/-
(Harpreet Singh Pruthi)
Secretary

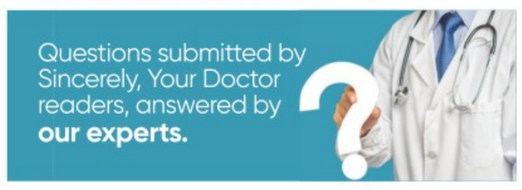
Your Health Questions Answered

1. An environment with high particulate matter is listed as a cancer risk. How alarming is the situation in Delhi? *Akhil Krishnan, Trivandrum*

High particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10) increases cancer risk, especially lung cancer. Delhi's pollution levels often exceed WHO limits by 10-15 times, making it a significant health concern. Long-term exposure raises the risk of lung diseases, particularly for smokers, outdoor workers, and those with pre-existing conditions. Always wear an N95 mask when out in public, use air purifiers indoors, and avoid outdoor activities during peak pollution. Invest in regular health checks which include lung function tests and screenings for high-risk individuals.

2. After recovering from cancer, is there any chance of getting cancer again? *Arathy, Trivandrum*

Yes, recurrence is possible if the same cancer returns locally or if tiny undetected cells grow later. Stay connected with your treating oncologist. Routine health checks can help detect any recurrence early. A balanced diet, regular exercise, avoiding smoking and alcohol, and managing stress can reduce overall cancer risk.



3. My father was diagnosed with prostate cancer at age 69 and underwent surgery. Is it hereditary? I'm 38 years old and a teetotaller. *Abhilash A, Chennai*

Only 5-10% of cancer cases are hereditary, so your father's diagnosis doesn't necessarily mean high risk for you. However, having a first-degree relative does increase risk by 2-3 times. Start routine PSA (prostate-specific antigen) tests by age 40-45. Ensure optimal weight as obesity raises cancer risk. Limit red meat and processed foods. Your lifestyle choices already help lower your risk – stay proactive with annual health checks!

4. What are the cancer screening tests for women? *Annie John, Ernakulam*

It is important to undergo routine cancer screenings based on your age, family history, and risk factors. Here are the recommended cancer screenings for all women:

- **Breast Cancer:** Mammogram every 1-2 years (from age 40), yearly clinical breast exams, monthly self-breast exams.

> *Men should undergo PSA screening every 2-4 years from age 50 and colonoscopy every 10 years from age 45. Clinical oral exam if a tobacco-user, LDCT if a smoker/ex-smoker, ultrasound and AFP blood test if a heavy alcohol consumer.*

- **Cervical Cancer:** Pap smear every 3 years (from age of first sexual contact); if done along with HPV test, then every 5 years.
- **Colorectal Cancer:** Colonoscopy every 10 years (from age 45) or stool tests annually.

These are the recommended screenings for high-risk individuals:

- **Lung Cancer:** Low-Dose CT Scan (LDCT) - if you have a history of smoking (past or current).
- **Ovarian Cancer:** Transvaginal ultrasound and CA-125 blood test (from age 40) - if there is family history of ovarian cancer.
- **Oral Cancer:** Clinical oral exam (from age 30) - for tobacco users.
- **Liver Cancer:** Ultrasound and AFP Blood Test (from age 40) - if you have history of liver conditions or heavy alcohol consumption.
- **Skin Cancer:** Full-body skin exam - if you have a history of skin changes, excessive sun exposure, or a family history of melanoma.

Note: Screening frequency may vary based on individual risk factors, as advised by your doctor.

Apollo ProHealth PRESENTS
Sincerely, Your Doctor
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE HINDU

A preventive healthcare initiative by **Apollo ProHealth** and **The Hindu**

Have questions for our doctors?
WhatsApp us at 89392 83283
or email us at sincerelyyourdoctor@thehindu.co.in

INBRIEF

Wipro commits to invest $200 mn in Wipro Ventures

Wipro Ltd. on Wednesday said it will commit $200 million to its venture arm, Wipro Ventures, in its latest round of funding. This is the fourth round of funding raised by Wipro Ventures since its inception 10 years ago and is aimed at accelerating the company's investments in early-to mid-stage start-ups, the company said in a statement. CEO & MD Srini Pallia said the investment reaffirmed Wipro's commitment to help start-ups grow faster and innovate.

Recyclekaro expands e-waste recycling capacity three-fold

Recyclekaro, which is into e-waste management and lithium-ion battery recycling, said it has increased its total e-waste recycling capacity to 24,000 tonnes annually at its facility in Palghar, near Mumbai. While e-waste recycling capacity has been increased from 7,500 tonnes to 24,000 tonnes per year, battery recycling capacity has grown from 4,200 tonnes to 10,000 tonnes per year, the company said. Till date, the company has recycled 26,632 MT of e-waste, it said.

RRP to buy chip packaging tech from Deca Technologies

Semiconductor firm RRP Electronics has entered into an MoU with U.S.-based Deca Technologies, Inc. to acquire the latter's wafer-level packaging capabilities. "This partnership marks a significant milestone in India's journey to becoming a global semiconductor powerhouse," RRP Electronics said. Under the MoU, RRP will integrate Deca's wafer-level chip scale packaging and M-Series fan-out wafer-level packaging technologies into its processes.

CAIRO

Hamas to turn over bodies of four hostages for hundreds of prisoners

REUTERS

Hamas will return the bodies of four dead Israeli hostages on Thursday in exchange for Israel's release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. Israel has delayed the release of about 600 Palestinian prisoners since Saturday to protest what it says is the cruel treatment of hostages during their release by Hamas. AP

PARIS

French police claim to have killed man holding knives in Paris region

AFP

French police killed a man holding a knife in each hand after he "threw himself" at them in the northeastern Paris. The incident happened as police approached "a man sitting at a bus stop with a knife in each hand" in Dugny. Police and officials responsible for investigating police misconduct have both opened a probe. AFP

WASHINGTON

Trump plans to sue media outlets which use anonymous sources

AP

U.S. President Donald Trump, furious over a disparaging new tell-all book about him, threatened to sue authors and media outlets that use anonymous sources. The move comes after the publication of a new expose by Michael Wolff, who also wrote 2018's *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House*, that has Mr. Trump livid. AFP

TAIPEI

Taiwan sends forces in response to China 'live-fire' drills off island

AFP

Taiwan sent forces on Wednesday in response to China's "live-fire" drills off the self-ruled island while condemning the exercises as dangerous. China deployed 32 aircraft near Taiwan as part of a joint combat drill with Chinese warships and announced "live-fire exercises" in an area about 74 km off the island's south. AFP

Russia, U.S. envoys to meet in Turkiye to discuss the operation of embassies

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov confirms the development during a visit to Qatar; staffing at embassies had been hit hard in recent years by mutual expulsions of large numbers of diplomats and other restrictions imposed by both countries

Associated Press

Diplomats from Russia and the United States will meet in Istanbul on Thursday to discuss the operation of their respective embassies in Moscow and Washington, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Wednesday.

The meeting follows Russia-U.S. talks in Saudi Arabia last week that marked an extraordinary shift in U.S. foreign policy under President Donald Trump and a clear departure from U.S.-led efforts to isolate Russia over its war in Ukraine.

Sudden shift: Activists protest against Donald Trump's policy on Ukraine in front of the U.S. embassy in Kyiv on Wednesday. AP

At the talks, Moscow and Washington agreed to start working toward ending the war and improving their diplomatic and economic ties. That includes restoring the staffing at embassies, which in recent years were hit hard by mutual expulsions of large numbers of diplomats and other restrictions.

Prior to Mr. Trump's second administration, ties between Moscow and Washington had fallen to Cold War lows after Russia illegally annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and invaded Ukraine in 2022.

No Ukrainian officials were present at last week's talks. The Kremlin insisted that the meeting was about restoring relations and dialogue with the United States, something it said would pave the way for eventual peace talks.

Speaking to journalists during a visit to Qatar, Mr. Lavrov said that "diplomats of high-level experts" will meet in Istanbul on Thursday. He said they will discuss "the systemic problems that have accumulated as a result of the unlawful activities of the previous (U.S.) administration to create artificial obstacles for the work of the Russian embassy, to which we, naturally, reciprocated and also created uncomfortable conditions for the work of the American embassy in Moscow."

Mr. Lavrov added that based on the outcome of the meeting, "it will be clear how quickly and effectively we can move forward."

Ukraine can forget about joining NATO, says Trump

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump says Ukraine "could forget about" joining NATO military alliance as he prepares to host Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the White House on Friday.

Mr. Trump also said on Wednesday that he hopes to soon speak face to face with Russian President Vladimir Putin in hopes of reaching an agreement to end the war in Ukraine that began when Moscow invaded in February 2022.

The Republican President declined to detail what concessions he would ask the two sides to make, but he underscored his administration's position that Ukraine's aspiration to join NATO, the Western military alliance, is not tenable.

Donald Trump

"NATO, you can forget about it," Mr. Trump said. "I think that's probably the reason the whole thing started."

Mr. Trump said on Wednesday that Mr. Zelenskyy will visit the White House on Friday to sign a long-sought minerals deal that will closely tie the two countries together for years to come.

Mr. Trump made the announcement at the start of the first Cabinet meeting of his second term.

The Republican president has long complained that the United States has spent too much taxpayer money to support Ukraine in the war with Russia that began when the Kremlin invaded three years ago. Mr. Trump has framed the emerging deal that would give the U.S. access to Ukraine's deposits of so-called rare earth minerals – used in the aerospace, defense and nuclear industries – as a chance for Kyiv to pay back the U.S. for aid already sent for the war effort under Democratic President Joe Biden.

46 killed as military jet crashes in Sudan's residential location

Agence France-Presse
PORT SUDAN

Forty-six people were killed when a Sudanese military transport plane crashed into a residential neighbourhood on the outskirts of Khartoum, the regional government said on Wednesday.

The Antonov aircraft went down on Tuesday night near Wadi Seidna air base, one of the Army's largest military hubs in Omdurman, northwest of the capital.

The Army, which has been at war with the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) since April 2023, said the plane crashed during take-off, killing and injuring both military personnel and civilians.

The incident comes a day after the paramilitary group RSF claimed to have shot down a Russian-made aircraft

"After a final tally, the number of martyrs reached 46, with 10 injured," the Khartoum regional government's media office said in a statement.

The army-aligned Health Ministry had previously reported at least 19 dead.

Witnesses described hearing a loud explosion and seeing several homes damaged in the area. The crash also caused power outages in nearby neighbourhoods.

A military source cited a technical malfunction as the cause of the crash.

The crash came a day after the RSF claimed responsibility for shooting down a Russian-made Ilyushin aircraft over Nyala, the capital of South Darfur

The recent escalation follows significant advances by the army in central Sudan and the capital Khartoum in its multi-front offensive against the RSF.

Indian peacekeepers serve with commitment: UN

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Indian peacekeepers are present in most of our peace keeping missions and they are serving with commitment, the Under-Secretary General for UN Peace Operations, Jean Pierre Lacroix, said on Wednesday. He added that the peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is facing restrictions, especially in the areas controlled by the M23 rebels and they are taking all measures to ensure their safety. He called on member states to play a role in brining peace, terming India an important member.

Mr. Lacroix is in India coinciding with the conference on 'Women in Peacekeeping – A Global South Perspective', organised, on February 24-25, by the Ministry of External Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence and the Centre for UN Peacekeeping, which brought together women peacekeepers from India and 35 other countries.

Tall task: The UN said the peacekeeping mission in Congo is facing restrictions in areas controlled by the M23 rebels. AP

Mr. Lacroix stressed on the need for reforms in international governance, including the UN Security Council, to make it representative of today's reality. "It is very important for the UN to have this reform materialise... How that can be done is for member states to decide."

Asked about the possibility of a ceasefire in Ukraine and if there would be a third party, UN type, monitoring mechanism, he said "it is very hypothetical at this stage."

On the situation in the Congo, where the M23 has been gaining territory, he said the situation remains very concerning. The M23 is supported by the armed forces of Rwanda, and the situation is having a very negative impact on the population, he said. . "It is also placing our peacekeeping operations, at least in the M23-controlled areas, in a more challenging position with all sorts of restriction regarding movement, supply, etc." Mr. Lacroix said.

"I don't think peacekeepers are targeted," he said while acknowledging that Indian peacekeepers are present in the M23 areas. "They are monitoring the situation and will do everything to keep peacekeepers safe."

India, has traditionally been among the top troop contributing nations to UN. As on October 2024, India had a total of 5,466 peacekeepers, of which 5,046 were military personnel, making it the fourth largest troop contributing nation after Nepal, Rwanda and Bangladesh.

Sport

Journeyman Harris' incredible sojourn at the Bengaluru Open continues

TENNIS

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Billy Harris is quite the journeyman. He is 30 years old, has never entered the ATP top-100 and once travelled around Europe to play ITF Futures tournaments in his own Ford Transit van.

His entry into the ongoing Bengaluru Open main draw was only mildly less dramatic. Harris is the highest-ranked player on site at 110 but having not signed up for the tournament initially, he had to wind his way up from the qualifying rounds where he was a last-minute on-site alternate entry.

Untroubled: Harris coasted past Gengel. SUDHAKARA JAIN

He then lost in the final round of the qualifying only for lady luck to smile again as he secured a main draw berth because Canadian Alexis Galarneau (No. 162) pulled out.

The on-site alternate and the lucky-loser spots are both decided on the basis of rankings, and in that Harris had no match.

On Wednesday at the KSLTA courts here, Harris remained unrivalled on the glazed blue acrylic too, beating Czech Republic's Marek Gengel 6-4, 6-3 to enter the quarterfinals in rousing fashion.

In his demeanour, the Brit seems to have a typically stiff upper lip, and he showed little to no emotion while dispatching his opponent. After the contest, he appeared with an ice-strapping on his right wrist but played down that too.

However, under the harsh afternoon sun, Harris' game found full expression. He was relentless in his approach and ruthless in his shot-making – grass is after all his favourite surface – as he won 86% of his first-serve points, didn't face a single break-point and remained unruffled even when Gengel tried an under-arm serve deep in the second set.

"I thought I played a pretty solid match," Harris said later.

"I served well and got the breaks of serve that I needed in both sets.

"It's been a good trip [to India so far]. I have enjoyed it, and making the final in Delhi [Challenger] is obviously my best until now. To break into the top-100 is my next goal," he added.

Other results (round-of-16):

Nicolas Mejia (Col) bt Blake Ellis 6-1, 7-5.

James McCabe (Aus) bt Rio Noguchi (Jpn) 7-5, 5-7, 7-6(5).

Tristan Schoolkate (Aus) bt Jurij Rodionov (Aut) 6-3, 3-6, 6-2.

Lashka claims the Prayagraj Plate

HYDERABAD: Trainer L.V.R. Deshmukh's Lashka, ridden by A. Ashad Asbar, won the Prayagraj Plate, the main event of the concluding day's races of the Hyderabad Winter Races here on Wednesday, February 26. Trainer Leo D' Silva scored a hat-trick by saddling three winners in the first three races of the day.

1. TIME AND PLACE PLATE (DIV. II) (1,200M): CALABASAS (Akshay Kumar) 1, Beast Master (P. Sai K) 2, Foxy Girl (Kuldeep Sr.) 3 and Dashing Charm (Surya Prakash) 4. 1-1/4, 1-1/4 and 2. 1m, 13.63s. ₹13 (w), 12, 15 and 11 (p). SHP: 33, THP: 53, SHW: 13 and 20, FP: 51, Q: 41, Tanala: 139. Favourite: Calabasas. Owners: Mr. M. Ramakrishna Reddy, Mr. Bharat Venkat Epur & Mrs. Rajini Meka. Trainer: L. D' Silva.

2. PULWAMA PLATE (1,400M): GOLD GIVER (P. Ajeeth Kumar) 1, Pride Aside (Gaurav) 2, Arabeska (Ashad Asbar) 3 and Lake Michigan (A. Prakash) 4. Not run: Nijinsky Star. Short Head, 3/4 and 3-3/4. 1m, 27.15s. ₹27 (w), 13, 14 and 10 (p). SHP: 51, THP: 47, SHW: 18 and 38, FP: 154, Q: 104, Tanala: 299. Favourite: Arabeska. Owner & Trainer: Mr. L. D'Silva.

3. OSMAN SAGAR CUP (DIV. I) (1,200M): HURRICANE WAVE (Akshay Kumar) 1, Cherish The Lady (G. Naresh) 2, In Proposito (A. Prakash). 3 and Golden Inzio (Santosh Raj) 4. 2-1/4, 3 and 5-1/2. 1m, 13.15s. ₹21 (w), 12, 14 and 24 (p). SHP: 35, THP: 67, SHW: 12 and 15, FP: 97, Q: 54, Tanala: 652. Favourite: Hurricane Wave. Owner: Mr. Syed Mohiuddin Mufeed. Trainer: L. D'Silva.

4. TRIVENI SANGAM PLATE (1,200M): GOLDEN UNICORN (P. Sai Kumar) 1, Kantha (B. Nikhil) 2, Eminency (Md. Ekram) 3 and Jim (Uday Kiran) 4. 3/4, 2-1/4 and 3/4. 1m, 13.52s. ₹87 (w), 20, 58 and 24 (p). SHP: 250, THP: 49, SHW: 60 and 114, FP: 2,600, Q: 994, Tanala: 8,673. Favourite: Peanut. Owners: Mr. Jitendra D. Parekh, Mr. Leeladhar Sharma & Mr. Vijay Anand Jangti. Trainer: S. Sreekant.

NOTE: *Soon after the start, Peanut did not raise a gallop and dropped the rider Gaurav, who escaped unhurt.*

5. TUNGABHADRA PLATE (1,600M): TIGER RUBY (Uday Kiran P) 1, Sargent (H.M. Akshay) 2, Varaneek Gold (B.R. Kumar) 3 and Rani Ruckus (G. Naresh) 4. Not run: Miss Marvellous and Shah Of Iran. 8-3/4, 2 and 4-1/4. 1m, 39.20s. ₹24 (w), 13, 25 and 17 (p). SHP: 60, THP: 67, SHW: 29 and 37, FP: 242, Q: 177, Tanala: 1,050. Favourite: Tiger Ruby. Owner: Mrs. Rohini Thuppal. Trainer: M.F. Ali Khan.

6. PRAYAGRAJ PLATE (1,400M): LASHKA (A. Ashad Asbar) 1, Mikimoto (Kuldeep Sr.) 2, Detective (P. Sai K) 3 and Brooklyn Beauty (Shivansh) 4. Not run: First Class. 3/4, 2 and 2. 1m, 24.01s. ₹30 (w), 14, 10 and 16 (p). SHP: 36, THP: 30, SHW: 25 and 12, FP: 91, Q: 44, Tanala: 331. Favourite: Mikimoto. Owners: Col. S.B. Nair & Mr. Aditya P. Thackersey. Trainer: L.V.R. Deshmukh.

7. NARMADA PLATE (1,100M): ESPIONAGE (Kuldeep Singh Sr.) 1, Briar Ridge (Santosh Raj) 2, Warwick (Deepak) 3 and Arion One (B.R. Kumar) 4. 5-1/4, 3/4 and Head. 1m, 4.90s. ₹18 (w), 12, 61 and 30 (p). SHP: 158, THP: 66, SHW: 17 and 167, FP; 584, Q: 629, Tanala: 9,354. Favourite: Espionage. Owners: M/s. Prakash Babu, P. Ranga Raju, Donald Anthony Netto & Tripuranenivenkata Aditya Chowdary. Trainer: D. Netto.

8. SUTLEJ PLATE (1,400M): REINING QUEEN (Rafique Sk.) 1, Exponent (R.S. Jodha) 2, Deccan Ranger (Uday Kiran) 3 and Silver Arrow (P. Sai K) 4. Not run: Una Paloma Blanca. 3/4, Short Head and Head. 1m, 29.84s. ₹338 (w), 40, 17 and 35 (p). SHP: 54, THP: 76, SHW: 63 and 16, FP: 2,6,03, Q: 1,648, Tanala: 19,455. Favourite: Silver Arrow. Owners: M/s. Sunil Kumar Sethi, Lakshmana Chowdary Yalamanchili, E. Anoop Kumar Reddy, Syed Nawaz Hussain & Sreerama Suresh. Trainer: Ananta Vatsalya.

Jackpot: 70%: ₹3,80,023 (c/o) & 30%: 9,580 (17 tkts.).

Mini Jackpot: (i) 21,691 (4 tkts.), (ii) 66,201 (2 tkts.).

Treble : (i) 71 (463 tkts.), 3,892 (7 tkts.), (iii) 6,953 (9 tkts.).

WELL DONE, MATE

Zadran overtakes Duckett for highest score in Champions Trophy

AFP

Afghanistan opener Ibrahim Zadran hit 177 for the highest individual score in the Champions Trophy during the match against England on Wednesday. It beat the tournament's previous record of 165, made by England opener Ben Duckett last week at the same Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore.

DISAPPOINTING

One of the top six batters needed to support Root: skipper Buttler

GETTY IMAGES

England skipper Jos Buttler said the batters should have supported Joe Root (120, 111b) better against Afghanistan. "Disappointing to be knocked out of the tournament. We had our chances in the game and we didn't take them. Root played an unbelievable innings and we needed one of the top six batters to stay with him," Buttler said.

PRIDE AT STAKE

Pakistan and Bangladesh aim to sign off with a victory

AFP

The sun played hide and seek on Wednesday as Pakistan players got into training on the eve of their final group league fixture against Bangladesh. Having already crashed out of the Champions Trophy, it's pride at stake for both the teams in a dead rubber at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. *Match starts at 2.30 p.m. IST.*

REPORTING FOR DUTY

Bowling coach Morkel rejoins India squad in Dubai

FILE PHOTO: R. RAGU

India's bowling coach Morne Morkel has rejoined the team after attending to a personal emergency back home and was part of the squad's training session in Dubai on Wednesday. Morkel had to leave the Indian camp a couple of days before the team's Champions Trophy opener against Bangladesh on February 20.

Zadran sizzles, Afghanistan knocks out England

Opener smashes record-breaking 177 to help the team bounce back from a shaky start; Omarzai comes up with an all-round show; Root's fluent century in vain as fellow batters come a cropper

CHAMPIONS TROPHY

Reuters
LAHORE

Inspired display: Zadran took the attack to the England bowlers before Omarzai scuttled the chase with a well deserved five-for. AFP

Tournament debutant Afghanistan sent England packing from the Champions Trophy after opener Ibrahim Zadran's epic 177 (146b, 12x4, 6x6) set up a narrow eight-run victory in a Group B thriller on Wednesday.

Zadran produced the highest score in the tournament's history to help Afghanistan overcome Jofra Archer's three early wickets and rack up 325 for seven.

Joe Root's classy 120 (111b, 11x4, 1x6) kept England alive in the chase until the 46th over but Afghanistan chipped away with regular wickets, eventually bowling it out for 317 with a ball left in the innings.

Pacer Azmatullah Omarzai, who finished with impressive figures of five for 58, ended Root's classy knock when the batter fell caught behind trying to play the ramp shot.

Electing to bat, Afghanistan was tottering on 37 for three in the ninth over before player-of-the-match Zadran combined in a 103-run stand with his captain Hashmatullah Shahidi (40) to prop up the innings. Omarzai (41) and Mohammad Nabi (40) also chipped in with useful cameos.

Zadran, who scored his sixth ODI hundred, overhauled England opener Ben Duckett's 165 against Australia to register the highest individual score in the tournament's history helped in part by England's ragged show towards the end.

England stuttered early in its reply, losing Phil Salt and Jamie Smith early. Duckett (38), Harry Brook (25) and skipper Jos Buttler (38) could not convert their starts but Root scored on a run-a-ball rate despite battling cramp towards the end of his knock.

The scores: Afghanistan 325/7 in 50 overs (Zadran 177, Shahidi 40, Omarzai 41, Nabi 40; Archer 3/64) bt England 317 in 49.5 overs (Root 120, Omarzai 5/58). **Toss:** Afghanistan. **PoM:** Zadran.

Sky is the limit as a fit-again Kuldeep takes flight

S. Dipak Ragav
DUBAI

Turning it on: Kuldeep provides crucial breakthroughs for India. AFP

In the build-up to India's Champions Trophy campaign, the focus was on Jasprit Bumrah's fitness and the effect his absence would have on the pace battery. Mohammed Shami was returning from injury while the other two – Arshdeep Singh and Harshit Rana – didn't possess too much experience.

If that was the case in the fast bowling department, a crucial member of the spin unit too was returning from a long layoff due to injury.

Over the last three years, Kuldeep Yadav has been one of India's premier bowlers in ODIs. Since 2022, the left-arm wrist spinner has the second-highest number of wickets for the Men in Blue (70 scalps at an impressive average of 23 in 45 games).

Kuldeep underwent groin surgery late last year and missed almost the entire domestic season.

He had only the England series for some game time before travelling to Dubai.

Though the 30-year-old took only one wicket each in the two one-dayers he played against Jos Buttler's side before the 'mini' World Cup, skipper Rohit Sharma wasn't perturbed by his returns in those outings and backed his lead spinner to the hilt.

Kuldeep's ability to provide breakthroughs, in the middle overs as well as at the death, has been a key ingredient in India's success formula. And he showed that again during the weekend, taking three wickets in the big game against Pakistan.

"Injuries take six months to recover. I played two matches against England. I had good rhythm. Even against Bangladesh I felt it, but obviously, you always look for wickets," said Kuldeep, who went wicketless against the Tigers. "But when I bowled my first over [against Pakistan], I knew I had better rhythm and control."

A significant change Kuldeep made after the knee surgery in 2021 was to run in quicker and increase his pace. Coming back from an injury, the biggest concern was how soon he could get to the level he showed in the last few years and whether he would be able to bowl at the same pace.

Against Mohammad Rizwan & Co., Kuldeep was at his wily best, beating Salman Ali Agha in flight and forcing a leading edge as the batter tried to smash one on the leg-side.

Off the next delivery, he trapped Shaheen Afridi in front with the wrong 'un, showing that he had a bagful of tricks.

About his rehab work, Kuldeep said he "maximised everything" to get fit for the tournament.

"I thank the NCA. I did not take too many days off and when I took a couple, I was called back. So I was focused. I knew I would miss the Champions Trophy if I delayed things even slightly. I was not sure if I would be able to recover in time, but all credit to the people at NCA."

The tweaker admitted that there was room for improvement considering that he had played only a few matches after the comeback. "To be honest, in terms of accuracy, I feel that if I play more games, I will be much better. When you face different match scenarios, you tend to mix your pace and find your variety," he added.

A game-changing performance in a high-profile encounter is the perfect launchpad for Kuldeep as he attempts to soar higher and higher again.

Rohit's men return for training session

S. Dipak Ragav
DUBAI

The Indian batters were keen to sharpen their big-hitting ability. S. DIPAK RAGAV

India, having enjoyed a well-deserved two-day break following its six-wicket win over Pakistan, returned to training at the ICC Academy grounds on Wednesday.

Rohit Sharma's men will play the Kiwis in the final Champions Trophy Group-A league game on Sunday at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium. It will be interesting to see if both teams can test their bench strength or stick to the winning combination.

India will play in the first semifinal next Tuesday here while New Zealand will travel back to Lahore after Sunday's fixture and play its knockout match on Wednesday (March 5).

On a breezy and chilly evening, the Indian team had a nearly three-hour session.

Vice-captain Shubman Gill, though, was the only absentee. Washington Sundar and K.L. Rahul were among the first set of batters to have a hit, facing the spinners Kuldeep Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja and Varun Chakaravarthy. Virat Kohli and Rishabh Pant started in the other net by facing pacers Mohammed Shami, Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh and Hardik Pandya. Shreyas Iyer and Axar Patel joined in later, taking throw-downs before alternating between the three nets.

Later, the rest of the contingent had a hit barring Rohit and Shami. The India skipper, who was in some discomfort while fielding during the Pakistan game, decided to take it easy.

The batters were keen to sharpen their big-hitting ability, taking on the bowlers and hitting towering shots that kept the onlookers on high alert.

'Lack of experience hurt us against India'

Shayan Acharya
RAWALPINDI

Pakistan head coach Aaqib. AFP

Pakistan head coach Aaqib Javed found himself in the eye of a storm following the team's dismal performance in the ongoing ICC Champions Trophy.

As the questions ranged from the team's poor show in the last three ICC events to the lack of aggression against India, the former international admitted that lack of experience hurt the side during its marquee clash against the rival in Dubai last Sunday.

"When Pakistan and India are playing, it's more than cricket. Numbers suggest that this Indian team was more experienced. Collectively, they have played more than 1,500 games, whereas for Pakistan, we are at the bottom. Collectively, this team has played around 400 games," Aaqib said on Wednesday.

"Babar (Azam) is the most experienced among the lot, who has played more than 100 games, followed by (Mohammad) Rizwan and Shaheen (Afridi). The rest have played less than 30 games, so when you're talking about more than a game, experience counts. There is no doubt that there was a lack of experience. There were new guys and we didn't perform to expectations under pressure," he said, adding that despite the absence of Jasprit Bumrah, Indian bowlers impressed as they had enough experience under their belt.

While he took responsibility for the team's poor performance, Aaqib also refused to attribute Pakistan's defeat to India playing all its matches in Dubai.

"There is a reason India is playing in Dubai.

"There is an advantage for sure when you play all your games in one venue, but we didn't lose because of that," Aaqib said.

Sciver-Brunt does the star turn as MI cruises past Warriorz

WPL

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

An excellent all-round show from Natalie Sciver-Brunt (three for 18 and 75 n.o.) helped Mumbai Indians defeat UP Warriorz by eight wickets in the Women's Premier League at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Wednesday.

MI (six points) moved to the top of the table on the back of a better run-rate than Delhi Capitals (six points). MI has a match in hand.

After dazzling with her seamers, Sciver-Brunt drove the MI chase with a classy knock. She kept the tempo high while her partner Hayley Matthews (59, 50b, 7x4, 2x6) took her time to settle in.

When the required rate began to rise, Sciver-Brunt stepped up with the big hits. The 32-year-old, who made 42, 57 and 80 n.o. in the previous matches, overtook RCB's Ellyse Perry as the highest run-scorer of the tournament.

After being put in to bat, UP frittered away a great start to end with a par score. Grace Harris, promoted to open the innings, made merry in the Power-Play. The Australian did serious damage in the fourth over, bowled by off-spinner Matthews, striking two sixes and two fours.

Harris thrived in the company of one-drop Vrinda Dinesh (33, 30b, 5x4), who played the anchor role. At the end of six overs, UP raced to 62 for one.

Leg-spinner Amelia Kerr bagged the crucial wicket of Harris (45, 26b, 6x4, 2x6), who mistimed a big hit. In the next over, off-spinner Sanskriti Gupta put the skids under UP's plans by dismissing Vrinda and Tahlia McGrath (1, 2b).

UP did not recover from the double blow, as wickets continued to tumble. Sciver-Brunt shut out the dangerous Chinelle Henry, while fellow pacer Shabnim Ismail was much too good for the tailenders.

The scores: UP Warriorz 142/9 in 20 overs (Harris 45, Vrinda 33, Sciver-Brunt 3/18) lost to Mumbai Indians 143/2 in 17 overs (Matthews 59, Sciver-Brunt 75 n.o.); **Toss:** MI; **PoM:** Sciver-Brunt. **Thursday's match:** *RCB vs. GG, 7.30 p.m.*

Making merry: It was Sciver-Brunt's night out on Wednesday. K. MURALI KUMAR

INBRIEF

East Bengal beats Hyderabad, keeps play-off chances alive

East Bengal FC kept its ISL play-off chances alive with a hard-fought 2-0 win over Hyderabad FC in Kolkata on Wednesday. East Bengal found the lead in the 86th minute off an own-goal from Hyderabad defender Manoj Mohammad before forward Raphael Messi Bouli doubled the score in injury time (90+4). This was the third successive victory for East Bengal, which now has 27 points from 22 matches and rises to eighth in the standings. Hyderabad remains in 12th in the 13-team table with 17 points from 22 matches.

The result: East Bengal 2 (Manoj Mohammad 86-og, Raphael Messi Bouli 90+4) bt Hyderabad 0.

Bopanna-Dodig pair exits from Dubai tournament

Rohan Bopanna and Ivan Dodig of Croatia were beaten 6-2, 6-4 by Julian Cash and Lloyd Glasspool of Britain in the doubles pre-quarterfinals of the $3,415,700 ATP tennis tournament in Dubai on Wednesday.

Other results: $15,000 ITF women, Pretoria, South Africa: First round: Ashmitha Easwaramurthi bt Abhilasha Bista (Nep) 6-2, 6-0. **Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Shria Atturu (USA) & Ashmitha bt Elisa Camerano & Julia Peer (Ita) 7-6(3), 6-2.

LIVE TELECAST

Ranji Trophy: (final), day 2, JioHotstar, 9.30 a.m.

Champions Trophy: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & JioHotstar, 2.30 p.m.

WPL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m.

ISL: Sports 18-3 & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m.

Serie A: gxr.world, 1.15 a.m. (Friday)

Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD) & JioHotstar, 1.30 a.m. (Friday)

Malewar, Karun help Vidarbha recover

Host fights back after losing wickets early; 21-year-old batter scores second hundred of the season; Kerala falters after Nidheesh's fine opening spell

RANJI TROPHY FINAL

P.K. Ajith Kumar
NAGPUR

Danish Malewar put on a display worthy of the grandest of stages in domestic cricket. With his unbeaten 138 (259b, 356min, 14x4 2x6), he frustrated Kerala on the opening day of the Ranji Trophy final on Wednesday.

The 21-year-old's superbly constructed innings not merely helped Vidarbha tide over a bumpy start, but take the day's honours. The host, put into by the first-time finalist, finished at 254 for four at the VCA Stadium here on Wednesday. This is the second hundred for Malewar in his maiden season; and he has hit five fifties, too. It was his fourth-wicket partnership of 215 with Karun Nair (86, 188b, 308min, 8x4, 1x6) that erased the smile off the Kerala players' faces. Sachin Baby's men, however, must be relieved that the Test triple-centurion was run out shortly before close. That was, however, after he completed 8,000 runs in First Class cricket.

On song: Malewar hit 14 fours and two sixes in his unbeaten knock. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

A fine opening spell by M.D. Nidheesh had suggested Kerala's gamble to bowl first might perhaps work: Vidarbha was reduced to 24 for three. But, only one of those wickets belonged to a frontline batter.

Possibly to counter the favourable conditions for bowling in the first session, Vidarbha promoted two men up the order. Neither lasted long. Parth Rekhade was found to be leg-before wicket on review: the ball from Nidheesh had shaped in enough.

The tall seamer struck again in his fourth over. Darshan Nalkande's half-hearted attempt to pull found the fielder at square-leg. Nidheesh's first spell read 6-4-5-2.

Eden Apple Tom, playing his first Ranji match after the 2021-22 season during which he became the first from Kerala to take a wicket with his first ball in First Class cricket, accounted for Dhruv Shorey. The opener chose to play a ball that moved slightly away, and was caught well by the wicketkeeper Mohammed Azharuddeen.

Not for the first time, Malewar and Karun built a big partnership, choosing only the right balls to punish. The younger man got to 99 with a six, stepping out against Aditya Sarwate.

Earlier, two fours off the back foot through the leg-side off an Eden over showed how good he could be. Worryingly for Kerala, more batters in form are still to come - including Yash Rathod, the man who has made 933 runs so far this season.

The scores:
Vidarbha -- 1st Innings: Parth Rekhade lbw b Nidheesh 0, Dhruv Shorey c Azharuddeen b Eden 16, Darshan Nalkande c Basil b Nidheesh 1, Danish Malewar (batting) 138, Karun Nair run out 86, Yash Thakur (batting) 5; Extras (b-4, lb-1, w-1, nb-2) 8; Total (for four wkts. in 86 overs): 254.
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-11, 3-24, 4-239.
Kerala bowling: Nidheesh 18-7-33-2, Eden 21-5-66-1, Sarwate 12-2-46-0, Basil 14-4-36-0, Jalaj 14-0-46-0 Akshay 7-0-22-0. Toss: Kerala.

Malewar's mantra of playing with Kerala bowlers' patience pays off

P.K. Ajith Kumar
NAGPUR

Making fifties is fine. Making hundreds is just finer. Danish Malewar is finding all that out in his first season in First Class cricket.

He came out to bat in the Ranji Trophy final against Kerala after scoring five fifties in the campaign, but only one hundred. Now he has two.

And he timed that century perfectly. When he reached the middle, Vidarbha was in a spot of bother, at 11 for two.

Batting wasn't easy at the time, on a fresh wicket, with M.D. Nidheesh giving nothing away. The former champion lost one more batter soon.

But, Malewar was joined by Karun Nair and, as they have done on many occasions before, they complemented each other. "We try to make it simple, not playing too many shots, but to play with the patience of the bowlers," Malewar said after returning to the dressing room with an unbeaten 138. "He (Karun) gives me tips while batting and makes me concentrate if I am not."

Malewar was determined to convert this innings into a big one. "This is a big game and I had prepared myself. Batting wasn't easy early on as the ball was seaming around, and there was moisture on the wicket."

He, however, showed talent and temperament. He has time to play his shots, some of which he unleashed during innings with panache, especially on the leg-side.

Surprised

Malewar said the team wasn't expecting Kerala to bowl first after winning the toss. "We wanted to bat first if we had won the toss," he said. "It would have been better if we hadn't lost the wicket - especially that of a set batter – but we are still in a good position," Malewar added.

SNAPSHOTS

Chelsea thrashes Southampton

LONDON: Chelsea moved into the Premier League's top four with a 4-0 demolition of hapless Southampton.

The results: Brighton 2 (Pedro 12-pen, Welbeck 75) bt Bournemouth 1 (Kluivert 61); Chelsea 4 (Nkunku 24, Neto 36, Colwill 44, Cucurella 78) bt Southampton 0; Crystal Palace 4 (Sarr 29, 71, Mateta 59, Nketiah 90+1) bt Aston Villa 1 (Rogers 52); Wolves 1 (Gomes 18) lost to Fulham 2 (Sessegnon 1, Muniz 47).

Atletico holds Barca

BARCELONA: Atletico Madrid conceded a two-goal lead then fought back from two down in a wild 4-4 draw with Barcelona in a Copa del Rey semifinal first leg thriller on Tuesday.

The result: Barcelona 4 (Pedri 19, Cubarsi 21, Martinez 41, Lewandowski 74) drew with Atletico Madrid 4 (Alvarez 1, Griezmann 6, Llorente 84, Sorloth 90+3).

IOC 'provisionally' recognises World Boxing

LAUSANNE: The International Olympic Committee on Wednesday 'provisionally' recognised the recently created World Boxing as the body to oversee the sport at the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

Parvez in lead after round one

BENGALURU: Parvez Ahmed emerged the leader at the end of round one of the Karnataka State-ranking tenpin bowling tournament currently underway in Bengaluru. Parvez scored a total pinfall of 1189, leaving behind Akaash Ashok Kumar (1175).

In the women's division, J. Preemal, with a pinfall of 1064, was first, followed by Hitasha Sisodiya (1007).

State Futsal during March first week

The Karnataka State Football Association will organise a State Futsal Championship for men and women in the first week of March. Winners will be nominated for the National Club Futsal Championship.

Entries are to be sent to ceoksfa@gmail.com on or before February 28. Contact 98808 66657.

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